

Chapter 4

Textual clause grammar: the semantic systems of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE and TEXTUAL STATUS and the grammatical systems of THEME and INFORMATION

4.1 Introduction

The central concerns in Chapters 2 and 3 have been the ideational metafunction, i.e. the construal of our experience of 'goings on' as structural configurations of process, participant(s) and circumstance(s), and the interpersonal metafunction, i.e. the enactment of our social roles through the selection of speech functions. While both metafunctions concern phenomena that are non-linguistic in nature, there is a third metafunction which is intrinsic to language, namely the textual metafunction, which is taken up in this chapter and in Chapters 5 and 6.

The textual metafunction concerns the creation of text, i.e. the enabling of the ideational and interpersonal meanings as text in context so that speakers can produce contextualised text and their listeners are guided in the process of interpreting it. Or to put it in a more technical way, the textual metafunction is oriented towards the creation of meaning in the realm of semiosis, a second-order, symbolic reality which is brought into existence by language itself. Investigating this 'enabling' function of textual metafunction is an examination of the grammatical resources of a language in the process of text creation. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (1999: 12), these resources include:

- (1) those differentiating among the different values and statuses of the components of the unfolding text;
- (2) those ongoingly expanding the text so as to create and maintain the semiotic flow;
and
- (3) those engendering a wide variety of diverse rhetorical structures.

The major focuses of this chapter and Chapters 5 and 6 will be on those resources differentiating values and statuses of various text components and those expanding text as semiotic flows, whereas those resources engendering texts as rhetorical structures will be

left for future study. In the present study, the first two types of the above resources will be differentiated into five types of resource according to the ranks at which they are located at the semantic stratum. They include:

- (1) resources for assigning thematic prominence and information prominence to various information chunks in a message;
- (2) resources for marking the textual status of messages in a text;
- (3) resources for identifying, keeping track and developing of various information across the text;
- (4) resources for indicating the logico-semantic relations between the messages in a text; and
- (5) resources for guiding the method of development as the text unfolds.

These five types of resource are construed as the semantic systems of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE, TEXTUAL STATUS, TEXTUAL CONTINUITY, TEXTUAL RELATIONS and TEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT respectively at the semantic stratum; these are realised by the grammatical systems of THEME, INFORMATION, VOICE, COHESIVENESS, and CONJUNCTION at the lexicogrammatical stratum.

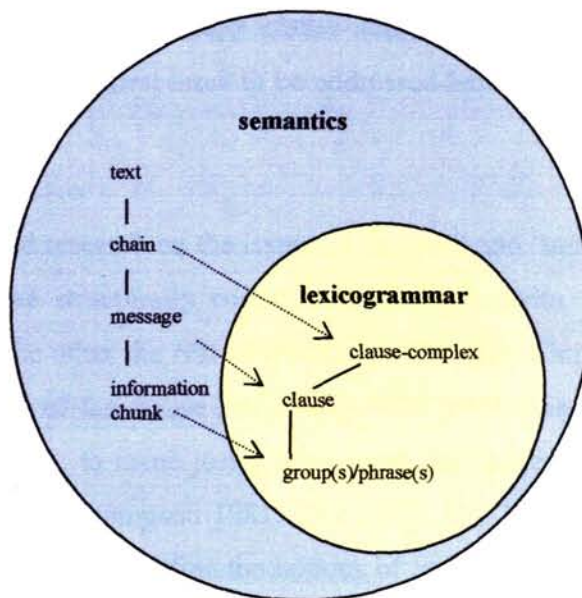
In this chapter, I will explore the semantic systems of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE and TEXTUAL STATUS in Section 4.2 and then their grammatical realisations, i.e. the system of THEME, in Section 4.3 and the system of INFORMATION in Section 4.4. In Chapter 5, I will examine the system of VOICE, which system is taken as the transition from the study of clause grammar to that of discourse semantics. Finally, in Chapter 6, I will investigate the issue of the connexity of texts. This is concerned with the semantic systems of TEXTUAL CONTINUITY, TEXTUAL RELATIONS and TEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT and their grammatical realisations.

4.2 Textual semantics

The textual clause grammar provides resources to enable the ideational and interpersonal modes of meaning to proceed as a flow of information. The flow is not a smooth and uniform one but a succession of peaks of prominence followed by troughs of non-prominence, forming a wave-like motion (see Halliday 1994; Matthiessen 1992). There are two different types of wave, namely thematic wave and information wave, which occur simultaneously as the text unfolds. Acting together, they form a sort of pulse or swell of information.

A thematic wave constitutes a quantum of information, i.e. a message, which is the basic unit in the textual metafunction. Each message is composed of several information chunks, whereas one or more cohesive and coherent messages comprise a text. Thus information chunk, message, chain (of messages) and text form the rank scale at the semantic stratum of the textual metafunction. Information chunk, message, and chain (of messages) are grammatically realised by group(s)/phrase(s), clause and clause-complex respectively. Strictly speaking, the clause-complex does not constitute a separate rank above the clause (see Halliday 1985/1994). The relationship of the different ranks is shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Textual realisation across strata



Unlike a thematic wave, an information wave is realised by an information unit, which in turn is expressed in a tone group. In the 'unmarked' case, an information unit is conflated with a clause. However, it may be longer or shorter than a clause. This means that an information wave may not match a thematic wave.

4.2.1 The semantic system of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE

As there are two types of wave, there are two types of prominence, namely thematic prominence and news prominence, which are realised by Theme and New respectively in the grammar. These two types of textual prominence have different carriers, engendered by the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions. From the ideational metafunction the grammar assigns a value to the relative order of the constituents in a clause to indicate their thematic prominence, whereas from the interpersonal metafunction the grammar assigns a value to the location of the major pitch movement (the tonic) to indicate the news prominence (for details, see Matthiessen 1992).

The Theme is the speaker's point of departure for the message. As a 'point of departure', it is most likely to occupy clause-initial position (see Halliday 1985/1994). Apart from its relative position in a clause, the Theme may be syntactically indicated by a marker or particle in some languages. In this case, it is not absolutely necessary for it to occupy clause-initial position. In English, as well as in French, German, Japanese and Vietnamese, the Theme does occupy clause-initial position (see Caffarel, Martin & Matthiessen *in press*). The first issue to be addressed here therefore is the identification of Theme in Chinese.

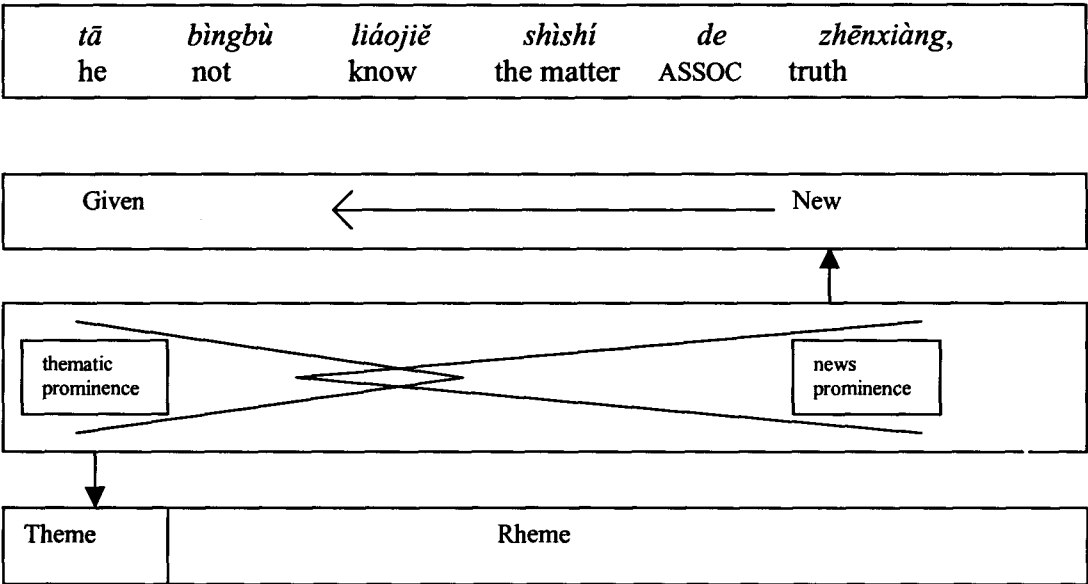
A survey of published research on the issues of 'subject' and 'topic' in Chinese indicates that a Chinese clause structurally comprises two components, one occupying clause-initial position and the other the rest of the clause. The clause-initial component is taken either as the 'subject' of the clause (see Wang 1955, 1964; Ding *et al.* 1961; Lin 1981; Fong 1994; Wang 1998, to name just a few), or as the 'subject and/or topic' (see Chao 1968; Tsao 1979; Li & Thompson 1981; Tiee 1990; Her 1990). However, it should be noted that the above linguists define the notions of 'subject' and 'topic' differently from

each other but I cannot go into the further detail here. The most important finding is that most scholars, if not all, agree that clause-initial position does indicate a particular prominence in Chinese. This position is so important that though there are no case markers in Chinese, it is sometimes marked with a pause or 'pause particle' (see Chao 1968; Li & Thompson 1981). Her (1990) calls the clause-initial component a 'frame'. Ho (1993) adopts Dik's (1978) distinction between Theme and Topic and calls it a 'Theme'. Fong et al. (1987), McDonald (1998) and Halliday & McDonald (in press) call it a 'Theme'. In Chapters 5 and 6, I will further examine the significance of this position in the development of text.

As in English, the New occupies clause-final position in the 'unmarked' case in Chinese. A survey of published research on the issue of 'definiteness' in Chinese indicates that the verb serves as a point of demarcation in a clause. The information preceding it in a clause is usually 'definite', 'generic', 'specific', 'affected', 'pre-existing' and/or 'referential', while the information after it is usually 'indefinite' and/or 'new' (see Lu 1955; Wang 1959; Firbas 1966; Chao 1968; Li 1971; Teng 1973; Dign et al. 1979; Li & Thompson 1974, 1981; Tai 1982; Wang 1987; Tiee 1990; Ho 1993; Fong 1994; McDonald 1998 and Halliday & McDonald in press).

As mentioned above, the textual metafunction employs the modes of organisation engendered by the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions. This, on the one hand, reflects the second-order, symbolic reality of the textual metafunction. On the other hand, this creates a representational problem at the present stage of the description of grammar because textual waves are non-discrete, whereas the carrier of the representational element is constituency. We therefore have to impose experiential-like discreteness by drawing constituency boundaries in the wave-like organisation of a message. The basic principle is that a boundary is drawn after the first element that has a function in transitivity to indicate thematic prominence. In addition, since the carrier of the interpersonal mode on expression is prosody, a left-facing arrow is drawn from the element at the end of the tonic prominence to indicate the news prominence. In the 'unmarked' case the swell of information in the Chinese clause looks like Figure 4.2 as below.

Figure 4.2: Imposing discreteness on textual wave



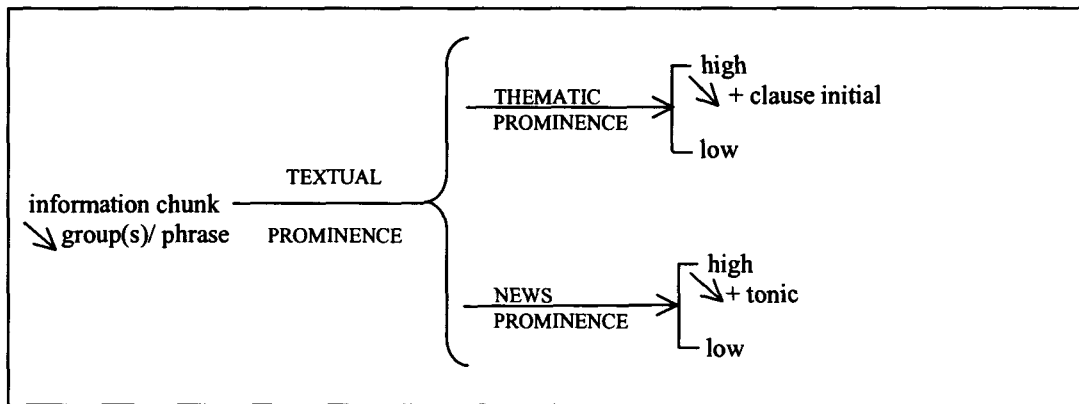
Through imposing discreteness on the textual wave, we can represent the flow of information in terms of a system network. We can say that as text unfolds, each chunk of information in a message is assigned a different degree of textual prominence, i.e. high thematic prominence against low thematic prominence, and high news prominence against low news prominence. The core paradigm of these two types of prominence is shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: The core paradigm of prominence

		THEMATIC PROMINENCE	
		[high]	[low]
NEW PROMINENCE	[high]	clause-initial/tonic	clause-final/tonic
	[low]	clause-initial/non-stress	clause-final/non-stress

Formulated systemically as in Figure 4.4, this gives the simultaneous systems of THEMATIC PROMINENCE and NEWS PROMINENCE.

Figure 4.4: The semantic system of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE



4.2.2 The semantic system of TEXTUAL STATUS

But what is the meaning of Theme? And what is the meaning of New? Or to be more exact, what is the semantic significance of assigning a constituent thematic prominence or news prominence? To answer these questions, let us go a little back in time to the original notion of Theme. The concept comes from Mathesius, who describes Theme as “that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation and from which the speaker proceeds.” (Mathesius translated by Firbas 1964: 286)

His definition of Theme obviously combines two notions, viz. information which is known or obvious in the given situation and information from which the speaker proceeds. Halliday in contrast separates these two notions as Given and Theme respectively. Fries (1983; 1995) labels the two approaches to thematic status as ‘the combining approach’ and ‘the splitting approach’ respectively. The present study, following Halliday’s approach, takes the stand that Given and Theme are two distinguishable notions.

Halliday has described Theme in terms of ideational metaphors like “the point of departure” (1967: 212), “the peg on which the message is hung” (1970: 161) and “the starting-point for the message” (1985: 39). The notion of a ‘peg’ is obviously a static one, while ‘point of departure’ and ‘starting-point’ are comparatively dynamic ones. As text

may be studied as a product or as a process, the static notion goes with the text as a product whereas the dynamic ones see text as a process, a semiotic movement.

In addition, Halliday has also explained the meaning of Theme in terms like “what is being talked about” (1967: 212), “that with which the clause is concerned” (1985: 38), and “what the clause is to be about” (1985: 39). These explanations of Theme closely resemble the notion of ‘topic’ (see Chao 1968; Li & Thompson 1981; Tsao 1987 to name just a few). However, as Halliday (1985: 39) has pointed out, ‘topic’ is associated with ‘only one particular type of Theme’.

Matthiessen (1995: 531) describes THEME as “the resource for manipulating the contextualisation of the clause...for setting up a local context for each clause in a text.” The notions of ‘contextualisation’ and of ‘local context’ for the clause bear a resemblance to the notion of ‘frame’ (see Her 1990). According to Matthiessen, he avoids using the term ‘frame’ since people have often thought about frames in ideational terms. THEME as a kind of language resource is perceived as a system of options that language users can choose to achieve a certain purpose. It is this ‘purpose’ that the present study is concerned with. In addition, it is the perspective on text as a process that the present study has adopted. This issue will be further discussed in Chapter 6.

In Chinese, every functional component in the configuration of representational metafunction can be placed at clause-initial position and thus assigned thematic prominence. However, this is not done at random as is shown by the fact that in 90% of all clauses in the corpus thematic prominence is assigned to the ‘participant’ which is conflated with the Subject of the clause, a pattern which constitutes the ‘unmarked’ case. It is ‘unmarked’ in the sense that it is the default case, the construction being used when there is no particular reason to choose differently. As a result, the conflation of Subject with Theme is always the most frequent option. However, this also means that for every message there is always a choice between a marked and an unmarked Theme. This thematic ‘markedness’ is closely related to the method of development (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Unlike Theme, the 'new' is "what the listener is being invited to attend to as new, or unexpected, or important", whereas the 'given' refers to "the old stuff: what is presented as being already known to the listener" (Halliday 1994: 59). Here we have to distinguish between Mathesius's notion of the 'given' from Halliday's. We know that information presented as "being already known" might not be "that which is known", already existed in the text or is "obvious in the given situation". Similarly, information presented as 'important' might not be new, unknown to the hearer or not previously mentioned in the text. As Halliday (1985: 39) has put it, "the Theme in a clause is what is prominent for the speaker; it is 'what I am on about'. The New in an information unit is what is made prominent (by the speaker) to the listener; it is 'what you are being invited to attend to'". In this way, apart from the selection of Theme, the choice of New is another resource for manipulating textual prominence, i.e. the information focus.

In the unmarked case, the New comes at the end of the information unit, and thus forms part of the Rheme, whereas in the 'marked' case, where the tonic indicating the location of the New falls on other elements, and it tends to run counter to the expectations of the interactants in the discourse. So, as with thematicity, there is also a choice between two options in newsworthiness, namely 'marked', which implies contrastive to expectation, and 'unmarked', which indicates that there is no particular reason to choose differently.

There is a third kind of 'markedness', concerning the scope of the information unit. An information unit can be longer or shorter than a clause, i.e. be 'marked', or it can be co-extensive with a clause, i.e. be 'unmarked'.

At this point we have distinguished three types of 'markedness'. First, the markedness of thematicity is closely related to the 'point of departure' of the message, which is significant to the method of text development. Second, the markedness of newsworthiness is concerned with the information focus, which is closely related to the interactants' expectations. Third, there is the markedness of the scope of the information unit; its semantic implications are yet to be explored. Since the corpus of the present study

consists of written texts, it is impossible to explore the third type of ‘markedness’ and its semantic implications here. This will be left for the future research and will not enter into the present semantic system. Let us examine a short text to see how the options of markedness are at work.

(4.1)

<i>xùlià yán dōng qīng chén wǔ shí,</i> Syria cold winter early morning five o'clock
Location: spatial + temporal
Adjunct
(topical) Theme

<i>[[zài tiělù zhǐnáng chēngwéi tuōlǔsī tèkuàichē de]] yī lièchē</i> at railway directory called Taurus express SUB one train
Existent
Subject
Rh-

<i>tīngkào</i> stop	<i>zài gàilèpō chēzhàn yuètái.</i> at Aleppo station platform
Process: existential	Location: spatial
Predicator	Adjunct
-eme	

(It was five o'clock on a cold winter's morning in Syria. A train which was designated in the railway directory as the Taurus Express stopped at the platform of Aleppo station.)

(4.2)

<i>zhè liè huǒchē</i> this MEAS train	<i>yǒu</i> possess	<i>chúshìchē, cānchē,</i> kitchen coach restaurant coach
Carrier/Possessor	Process: possessive	Attribute/Possession
Subject	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given		

<i>yī jié wòpù chē yǔ liǎng jié pǔtōng chēxiāng</i> one MEAS sleeping coach and two MEAS economy coach
Attribute/Possession (continued)
Complement (continued)
Rheme (continued)
← New

(The train consisted of a kitchen, a restaurant, a sleeping coach and two economy coaches.)

(4.3)

<i>zài dēng wòpǔ chēxiāng de jiētī shàng</i> at ascending sleeping coach ASSOC step upon	<i>zhàn zhe</i> stand ASP
Location: spatial	Process: existential
Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme
Given	

<i>yī míng [[chuān yàoyǎn jūnfú de]] niánqīng fǎguó lùjūn zhōngwèi,</i> one MEAS wear resplendent uniform SUB young French army lieutenant
Existent
Subject
Rheme (continued)
← New

(By the step leading up into the sleeping coach stood a young French army lieutenant who was resplendent in uniform.)

(4.4)

	zhèng ASP	yǔ yī gè āixiǎo de nǎnrén with one MEAS lean-small NOM man	tánhuà, talk
(Actor)		Accompaniment	Process: material
(Subject)		Adjunct	Predicator
((topical)) Theme	Rheme		
(Given)	← New		

((He) was talking with a small lean man.)

(4.5)

zhè rén this person	quán shēn whole body		yùhán zhuāngshù, against cold clothing
	Actor	(Process: material)	Goal
	Subject	(Predicator)	Complement
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given		←	New

(As for the man, his whole body was covered with heavy clothing.)

(4.6)

<i>lián</i> even (EMP)	<i>ěrduō</i> ear	<i>yě</i> also (EMP)	<i>dài-shàng le</i> wear ASP	<i>ěrmào,</i> ear muffs
	Actor		Process: material	Goal
	Subject		Predicator	Complement
(interpersonal)	(topical)	Theme	Rheme	
← New		Given		

(even his ears were covered with ear muffs,)

(4.7)

<i>chúle yī kē hóng bítóu hé liǎng piě shàngqiào de réndān húzī zhīwài,</i> besides one MEAS red nose and two MEAS pointing upward NOM curled moustache (-beside)
Exclusion
Adjunct
Topical Theme
Given

<i>shēnme</i> whatever	<i>yě</i> also	<i>kàn-bù-jiàn.</i> see-NEG-see
(Phenomenon)	VADV	Process: mental
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator
Rheme		
← New		

(Besides a red nose and two upward curled moustache, nothing could be seen.)

The above text is the first seven clauses of the Chinese translation of the English novel. It is divided into two paragraphs, clauses (4.1) and (4.2) belonging to the first paragraph and (4.3) to (4.7) to the second. Clause (4.1) sets the first scene of the story by assigning the country, the season, the time and the place textual prominence. The focus of information is *zài gùilèpō chēzhàn yuètái* (the platform of Aleppo station). The clause is thematically ‘marked’ because textual prominence is given to the circumstantial Adjunct instead of the Subject. In narrative writing, a thematically ‘marked’ clause, especially when the circumstance is assigned textual prominence, indicates the starting of a new episode.

Zhè liè huǒchē (the train) in (4.2) has already been introduced in (4.1). It is the Subject of the clause and is assigned textual prominence. It is treated as ‘known’ information while the information focus is given to the different coaches of the train. The information has nothing contrastive to the interactants’ (the readers’) expectations. So the clause is ‘unmarked’ in terms of both thematicity and newsworthiness.

Clause (4.3) is the first clause of the second paragraph. It also serves to introduce a new episode, i.e. it marks a change from introducing the scene to introducing the characters in the story. Textual prominence in the clause is again given to the circumstantial Adjunct instead of the Subject, i.e. the clause is thematically ‘marked’. The information focus is *niánqīng fǎguó lǔjūn zhōngwèi* (a young French army lieutenant). *Wòpù chēxiāng de jiētī* (the steps leading up to the sleeping coach) is treated as Given because *wòpùchē* (the sleeping coach) has already been mentioned in (4.2). The clause is ‘marked’ in terms of thematicity but ‘unmarked’ in terms of newsworthiness.

In (4.4), the elliptical Subject (the French lieutenant) is known information and assigned textual prominence. Part of the new information is *yī gè āixiǎo de nǎnrén* (a small lean man). This means that the French lieutenant is first introduced as Rheme/New in (4.3), becomes Theme/Given and leads to the introduction of the second character in (4.4). The clause is ‘unmarked’ in terms of both thematicity and newsworthiness.

In (4.5), *zhè rén* (this man) refers to the small lean man in (4.4). In the latter part of the story, we know that ‘this man’ is the detective Poirot, the major character in the novel. He is given a very special thematic status in the clause, encoded in a nominal group which is not structurally conflated with other ideational constituents in the clause (see Section 4.3.4.1). The clause is ‘marked’ in terms of thematicity but ‘unmarked’ in terms of newsworthiness. Clause (4.5) is also a sort of turning point, in the sense that this important character becomes the ‘local context’ for the following clauses.

In (4.6), the Subject *ěrdūo* (ears) is assigned textual prominence. This means that the clause is ‘unmarked’ in thematicity. *lián ... yě* (even ... also) are emphatic particles which indicate that the element embodied in the construction is the focus of information (see Section 4.4.2). In other words, *ěrdūo* is assigned the prominence of news. In addition, it does not occupy clause-final position. So the clause is ‘marked’ in terms of newsworthiness.

In (4.7), textual prominence is again given to a circumstantial Adjunct instead of the Subject, i.e. making the clause ‘marked’ in terms of thematicity. *Kàn-bù-jiàn* (cannot see) is assigned the prominence of news while *yī kē hóng bítóu hé liǎng piě shàngqiào de réndānhúzi* (a red nose and two upward curled points of moustache) is treated as Given. Though the nose and moustache have not been mentioned in the text, their introduction is not contrastive to our expectations. This is because Poirot is the ‘local context’ and his whole body is the Subject of (4.5); it is therefore not surprising that the Subject of (4.6) (his ears) is something related to the body. The clause is thus ‘unmarked’ in terms of news-worthiness. Table 4.1 summarises the two types of ‘markedness’ in the text.

Table 4.1: The analysis of markedness of a text

	thematicity	newsworthiness
paragraph 1		
clause 1	marked	unmarked
clause 2	unmarked	unmarked
paragraph 2		
clause 3	marked	unmarked
clause 4	unmarked	unmarked
clause 5	marked	unmarked
clause 6	unmarked	marked
clause 7	marked	unmarked

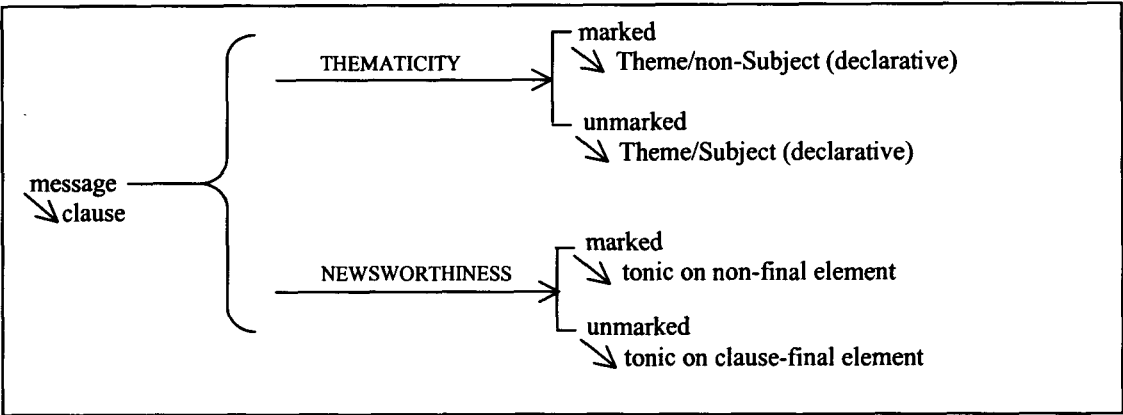
The core paradigm of markedness is shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5: The core paradigm of markedness

		THEMATICITY	
		[marked]	[unmarked]
NEWS- WORTHINESS	[marked]	Theme/non-Subject + tonic on non-final element	Theme/Subject + tonic on non-final element
	[unmarked]	Theme/non-Subject + tonic on final element	Theme/Subject + tonic on final element

At this point a tentative system of ‘markedness’ can be formulated systemically as in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6: A tentative system of markedness



In addition to displaying these three kinds of ‘markedness’, a message is always related to the previous message in a certain kind of logico-semantic relationship in order to form a coherent text (see Sections 6.3 and 6.4. for further discussion). This relationship can be either ‘implicit’, such as the relation between (4.8) and (4.9), or ‘explicit’, such as between (4.10), (4.11) and (4.12). When the relation is explicitly stated by a conjunctive element, this element can be assigned thematic prominence as in (4.12).

- implicit

(4.8)

<i>yī zhèn cìmiàn hán fēng</i> one MEAS piercing face cold wind	<i>xiàng yuètái</i> toward platform	<i>hūxiào ěrguò,</i> whistle pass
Actor	Location	Process: material
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given	← New	

(A piercing cold wind came whistling toward the platform.)

(4.9)

<i>liǎng rén</i> two person	<i>dōu</i> also	<i>dǎ le</i> hit ASP	<i>gè hánjīn.</i> MEAS shiver
Actor	VADV	Process: material	Range
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme		
Given ← New			

(Both men shivered.)

- explicit

(4.10)

<i>císhí</i> this time		<i>fèngmìng</i> compliant with order
Location	(Actor)	Process: material
Adjunct	(Subject)	Predicator
Topical Theme	Rheme	
Given		

<i>lái wéi yì mǐn xiǎn yào de mòshēngkě rén sòng xíng,</i> come for one MEAS distinguished NOM stranger see off		
Beneficiary		
Adjunct		
Rheme (continued)		
← New		

((He) complied with the order to come and see a distinguished stranger off at such a time.)

(4.11)

	<i>dìquè</i> really	<i>bù shì</i> NEG be	<i>líng rén xiànmù de chāishì,</i> make people envy NOM duty
(Carrier)	VADV	Process: categorising	Attribute
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
((topical) Theme)	Rheme		
Given	←————→ New		

((This) was not a duty to be envied.)

(4.12)

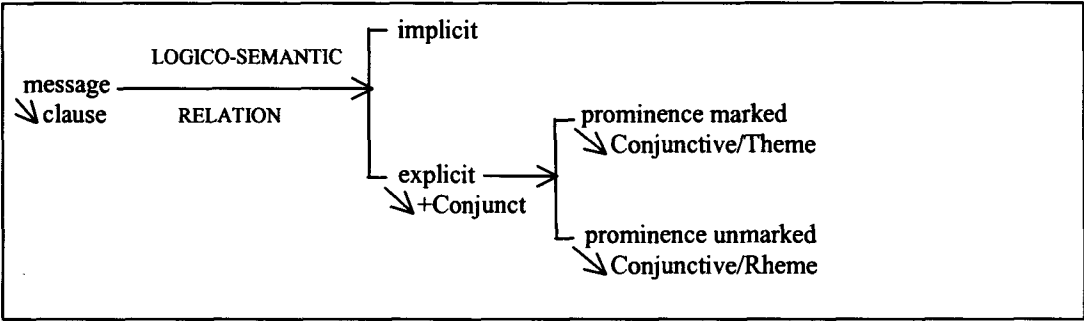
<i>rínér</i> however	<i>dùbósīkè</i> Dubose	<i>zhōngwèi</i> Lieutenant	<i>zài</i> at	<i>zhíwù</i> duty	<i>shàng de</i> upon ASSOC	<i>biǎoxiàn</i> performance
HCON	Carrier					
	Subject					
(textual)	(topical) Theme					
Given						

<i>què</i> really	<i>shì</i> be	<i>yī fū dàzhàngfū de qìgài.</i> one MEAS manhood NOM spirit
VADV	Process: categorising	Attribute
Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
Rheme		
←————→ New		

((However, Lieutenant Dubose performed his duty manfully.)

These distinctions of logico-semantic relations between ‘implicit’ and ‘explicit’, and in the case of explicit, ‘marked’ and ‘unmarked’ are summarised in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7: The system of LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONS



Furthermore, a message always carries the speaker’s modal investment in the Subject (for details, see Chapter 3). Similarly, the modal investment can be assigned thematic prominence as in (4.13).

(4.13)

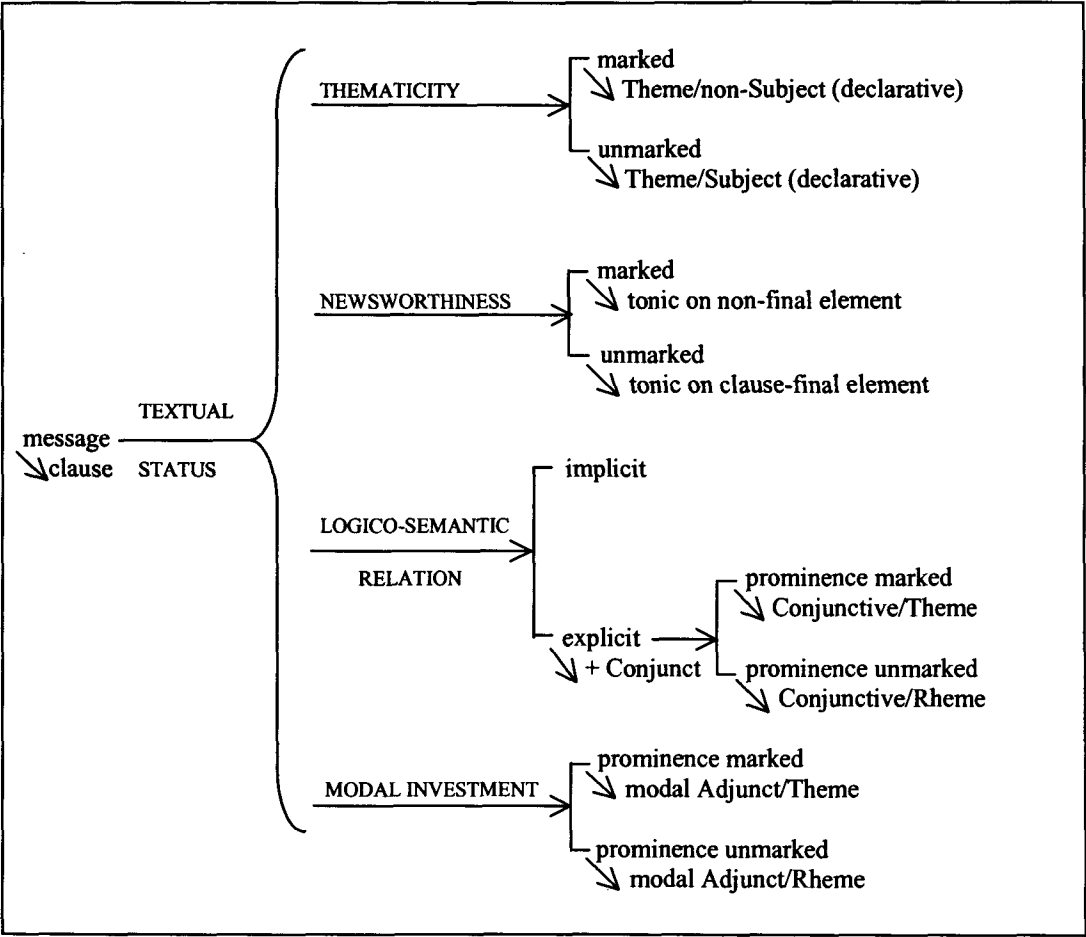
<i>dùbósike</i> Dubose	<i>ǒurán</i> occasionally	<i>tīng guò</i> hear ASP	<i>tā yǔ zhè wèi mòshēng kèrén de yī xiē tánhuà.</i> he and this MEAS stranger guest SUB one MEAS conversation
Senser	VADV	Process: mental	Phenomenon
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
(topi.) Theme	Rheme		
Given		←—————→	New

(Dubose occasionally overheard part of a conversation between him and this stranger.)

In the above example, *ǒurán* (occasionally) is not assigned thematic prominence. However, an alternative option is to place *ǒurán* in front of the Subject. In this case, the Adjunct *ǒurán* is assigned thematic prominence.

At this point four simultaneous subsystems have been proposed; these are represented as a network as in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8: The semantic system of TEXTUAL STATUS



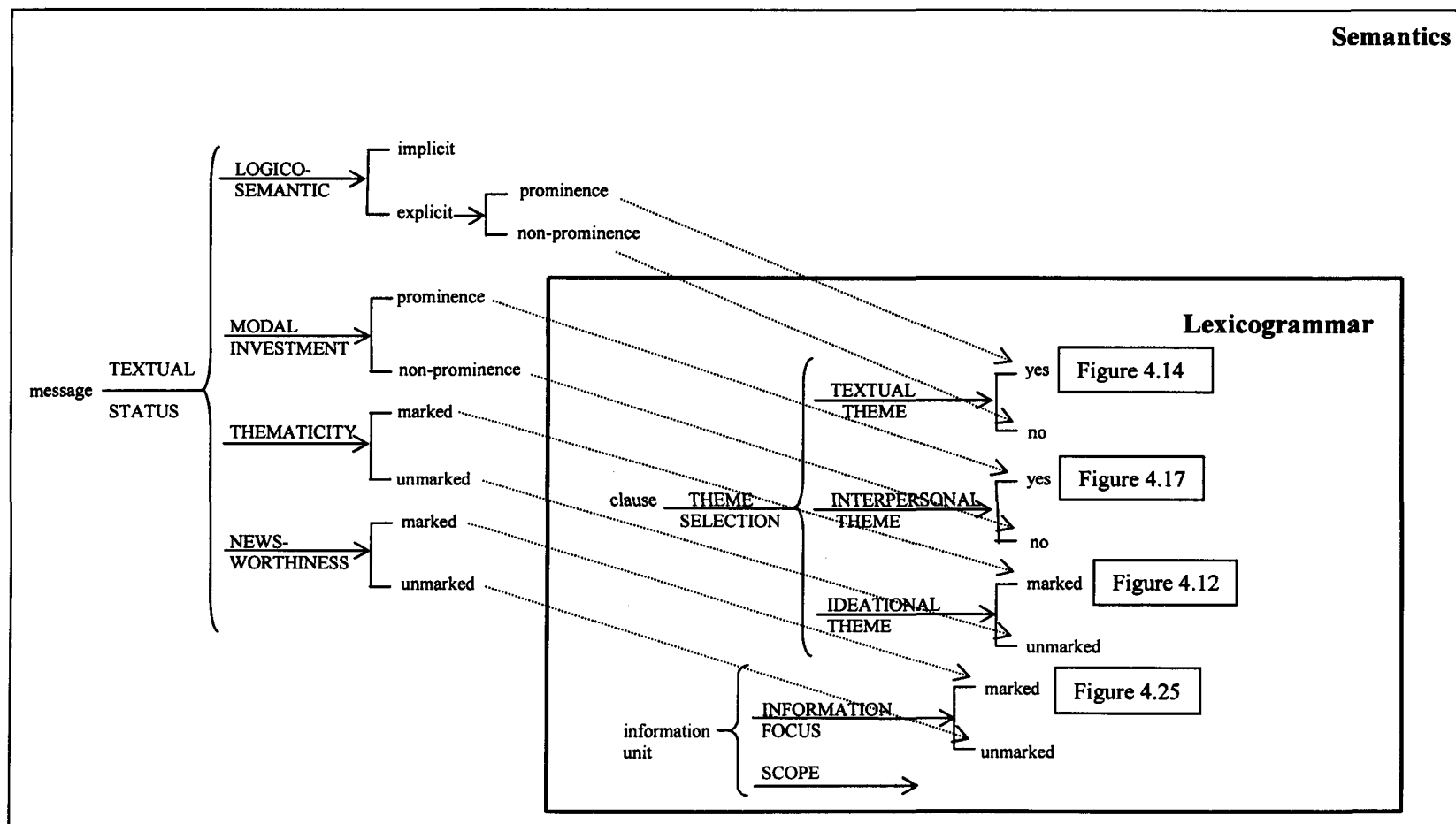
4.3 The grammatical system of THEME

I will now turn from the systems at the semantic stratum to the systems at the lexicogrammatical stratum, i.e. the system of THEME (Section 4.3) and the system of INFORMATION (Section 4.4). The semantic system of TEXTUAL STATUS and its realisation in various grammatical systems is shown in Figure 4.9. As mentioned in Section 4.2, it is necessary to impose experiential-like discreteness by drawing constituency boundaries between the peak and the trough in the wave of information. According to Halliday (1985/1994), the Theme of a major clause extends up to the first element that has a transitivity function. Based on this recognition criterion, in the present study we have analysed the Theme in every clause in the corpus and grouped them into several categories according to their functions in the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions.

4.3.1 Simple Theme: Topical Theme only

The element in the Theme with a transitivity role is known as topical Theme. In Chinese, a topical Theme can conflate with any participant (either the Subject or the Complement in the interpersonal part of the grammar), a circumstance (Adjunct) or the process (Predicator). This forms the primary contrast between 'unmarked' and 'marked' topical Theme. Generally speaking, the unmarked topical Theme is the one conflated with the Subject in the clause, whereas the marked topical Theme is not. In this section, I will examine this generalisation in detail.

Figure 4.9: Textual realisation between the semantic and lexicogrammatical strata



Theme/Participant (the Subject): unmarked Theme

(4.14)

<i>zhè liè huǒchē</i> this MEAS train	<i>yǒu</i> possess	<i>chúfàn chē, cānchē</i> kitchen coach restaurant coach
Carrier/Possessor	Process: possessive	Attribute/Possession
Subject	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Given		

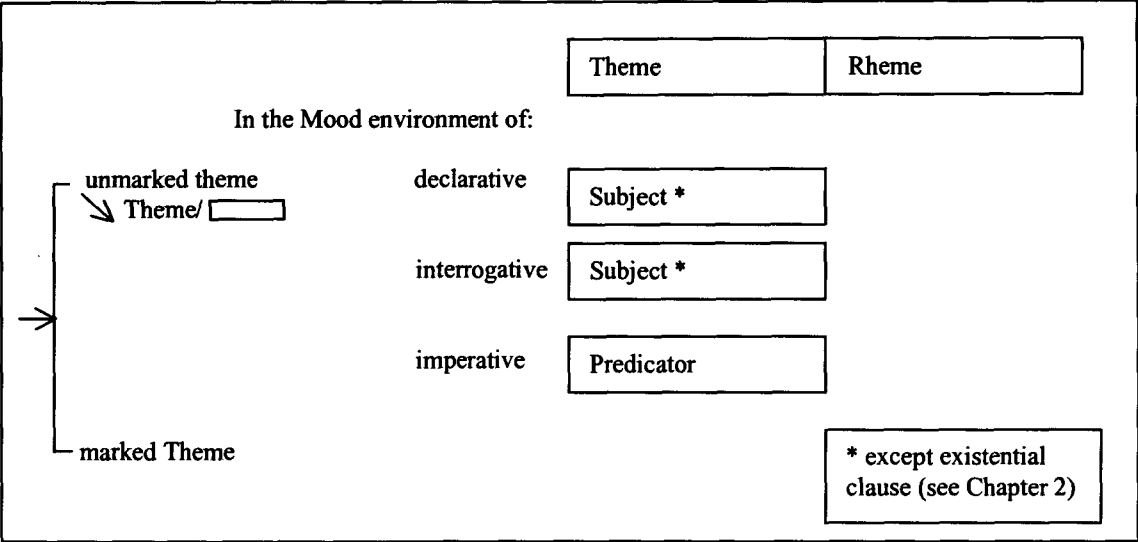
<i>yī jié wòpù chē yǒu liǎng jié pǔtōng chēxiāng</i> one MEAS sleeping coach and two MEAS economy coach
Attribute/Possession (continued)
Complement (continued)
Rheme (continued)
← New

(The train consisted of a kitchen, a restaurant, a sleeping coach and two economy coaches.)

Clause (4.14) indicates an ‘unmarked’ option for an indicative clause, a default choice that the speaker will make if there is no particular reason to choose differently. As a result, this type of option is always the most frequent one in Chinese as shown in Figure 4.10. However, there are two exceptions to the generalisation that the unmarked topical Theme is the Subject; one can be stated in experiential terms, the other in interpersonal ones. First, in ‘existential’ clauses, the Theme is usually conflated with a circumstance or the Process ‘*yǒu*’ instead of the Subject (for details, see Chapter 2). Second, in ‘imperative’ clauses, the Subject is usually ellipsed so the Predicator occupies clause-initial position³ (for details, see Chapter 3). The different manifestations of unmarked Theme in the context of MOOD are shown in Figure 4.10.

³ There is an alternative interpretation according to which the Theme in an imperative clause is still the presumed Subject.

Figure 4.10: Unmarked Theme Selection in MOOD Context



2. Theme/other transitivity roles: marked Theme

a. Theme/circumstantial Adjuncts

(4.15)

<i>‘míngtiān, libàiyī wǎnshàng</i> tomorrow Monday night	<i>nín</i> you	<i>jiù</i> then	<i>dào</i> arrive	<i>yīsītǎnbǎo le.</i> Stamboul ASP
Location: temporal	Carrier	VADV	Process: material	Range
Adjunct	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme			

(‘Tomorrow, Monday night, you will arrive in Stamboul.’)

In Chinese, it is more common to place the circumstance after the Subject/participant: *nín míngtiān, libàiyī wǎnshàng jiù dào yīsītǎnbǎo le* (You, tomorrow, Monday night, will arrive Stamboul) than as Theme. Assigning the circumstance thematic prominence is an important strategy in the method of text development (see Chapter 6).

A circumstance in Chinese usually begins with a pre-verb, for instance, *zài* (at). This pre-verb however is often absent when the circumstance is thematic. The absence of the pre-verb here becomes an argument in some formal Chinese grammars to support the

contention that the circumstance is indeed the ‘subject’ of the clause. Such an argument is mainly based on considerations ‘from below’. From a functional perspective, Ho (1993:38) explains the absence of pre-verb in thematic position as the speaker’s deliberate choice to “sever the syntactic tie”⁴ between the Theme and the Rheme. And if we approach the issue ‘from above’, we know that the Subject is defined as the element taking modal responsibility for the success of the clause, or in Matthiessen’s terms “the key to the interpersonal status of the clause – its arguability status” and that this element can still be analysed as a circumstance.

b. Theme/Participant (Complement)

(4.16)

<i>zhè huà</i> this conversation	<i>tā</i> he	<i>yǐ</i> already	<i>bù shì</i> NEG be	<i>dì yī cì</i> first MEAS	<i>shuō le.</i> say ASP
Verbiage	Sayer	VADV		Time (deictic)	Process: verbal
Complement	Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme				

(This conversation he did not hold for the first time.)

A more frequent position for the Complement in Chinese is after the Predicator, e.g. *tā yǐ bùshì dìyī cì shuō zhè huà le* (He did not the first time have say this conversation). In spoken Putonghua there will be a short pause after the Theme, *zhè huà* (this conversation) (Li & Thompson 1981), whereas in written Chinese it is not uncommon to put a comma after it. It is called ‘fronting’ or ‘object-fronting’ in formal or reference grammars of Chinese. But the term ‘fronting’ or ‘object-fronting’ only specifies the syntactic transformation without indicating the purpose/function of such a movement. Li and Thompson (1981) interpret it as the topic of the clause. In the present study, it is analysed as Theme, namely a marked topical Theme of Complement.

⁴ Ho (1993: 38) believes that though the Theme and the Rheme are semantically related, the Theme does not stand in any direct structural relation of selectional restriction with anything in the Rheme. When a selectional relation is present, speakers tend to deliberately sever the tie through a number of means, in which the absence of pre-verb being one of them. However, we should realise that “selectional restrictions” relate to the experiential transitivity structure of the clause, not to the textual theme-rheme structure.

c. Theme/Process

(4.17)

<i>tāmen</i> <i>línshì</i> <i>de</i> <i>fāngmén</i> they next room ASSOC door	<i>dǎ-kāi</i> <i>le</i> , hit-open ASP
Goal	Process: material
Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme

(The door of the room next to theirs was opened,)

<i>zōu-chū</i> run-out	<i>nà</i> <i>gè</i> <i>shòuruò</i> <i>cāngbái</i> <i>de</i> <i>nánpú</i> . that MEAS thin pale NOM manservant
Process: material	Actor
Predicator	Subject
(topical) Theme	Rheme

(and out stepped that thin, pale manservant.)

A more frequent position for the Process/Predicator in an indicative clause in Chinese is after the Actor/Subject: *nà gè shòuruò cāngbái de nánpú zōu le chū-lái* (That thin, pale manservant stepped out). This option, i.e. Theme/Process, is extremely ‘marked’ and infrequent in Chinese unless the clause is an imperative or existential one.

The above example structurally resembles an ‘existential’ clause like *zōu-chū yī gè shòuruò cāngbái de nánpú* (stepped out a thin, pale manservant). Semantically, an existential process clause introduces a new participant (which usually becomes the topic in the following clauses) in the text. Here the demonstrative reference *nà* (that) indicates that the nominal group *nánpú* (manservant) is definite (specific & referential). In addition, the Subject in the following clause in the text remains to be Poirot and the topic is what he sees through the opening door. Thus the above example is not interpreted as an ‘existential’ clause.

As mentioned, there are two situations in which the Process usually occupies clause-initial position. They are existential clauses in representational terms and imperative

clauses in interpersonal terms. In an existential clause, the Theme is usually conflated with the circumstance or the Process, especially when the verb is *yǒu* (be), instead of the Subject⁵. Among these two structures, it is more common for the circumstance to occupy clause-initial position as in (4.18).

(4.18)

<i>chē shàng</i> train upon	<i>yǒu</i> be	<i>gè měiguó biāoxíng dàihàn.</i> MEAS America large big-man
Location: spatial	Process: existential	Existent
Adjunct	Predicator	Subject
(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(There is a large American on the train.)

An imperative can begin with the Subject. However, in the ‘unmarked’ case, the Subject is presumed as in (4.19):

(4.19)

	<i>qù</i> go	<i>dìshíyī hào fángjiān</i> eleventh number room
(Actor)	Process: material	Range
(Subject)	Predicator	Complement
	(topical) Theme	Rheme

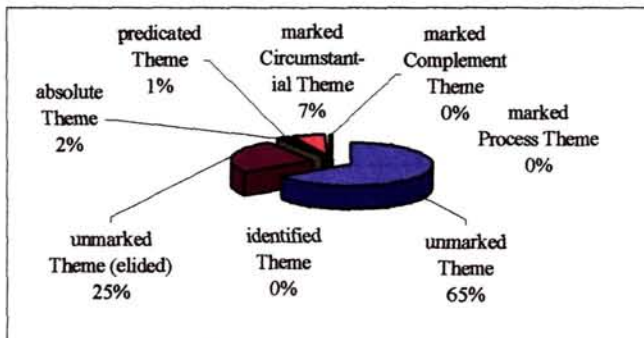
(Go to room 11.)

Figure 4.11 displays the proportion that each subtype of topical Theme represents out of the total number of topical Theme in the Chinese corpus. The relative frequency of ‘unmarked’ topical Theme (90%) is much higher than the ‘marked’ topical Theme (9%). Among the ‘marked’ Themes, topical Theme of Circumstance is the most frequent while

⁵ Some linguists argue that the clause-initial position is reserved for the ‘definite’, ‘specific’ or ‘known’ element (for details, see Chapter 5). When an ‘indefinite’, ‘unspecific’ or ‘new’ element happens to occupy that position, a “dummy” verb *you* is added in front of it (see Ho 1993). However, we can argue that there is nothing “dummy” about the verb *you*. It is given thematic status to indicate the existential-presentative nature of the clause, in preparation for the introduction of Existent as New.

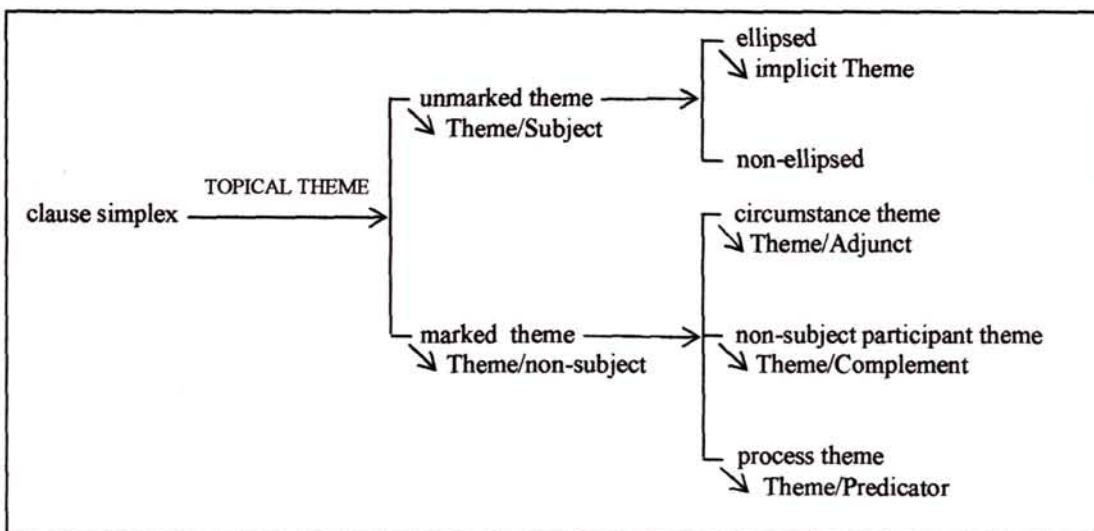
both topical Theme of Process and topical Theme of Complement round off to 0%. In fact, of the 10,075 Themes in the corpus only 45 are Complements and 2 Processes. This suggests that Process as topical Theme is extremely 'marked'. The figure also includes the relative frequencies of absolute Themes, predicated Themes and identified Themes. These three types of Theme will be examined later in this section.

Figure 4.11: Proportion of various topical Themes



At this point a tentative system of topical Theme can be formulated systemically as in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12: A tentative system of TOPICAL THEME



4.3.2 Textual Theme

Purely textual elements of the clause also contribute thematic material; they are known as textual Themes. They assign thematic prominence to textual elements with a linking function, usually with the preceding clause but sometimes with the following one. In Chinese, textual Themes can be ‘continuative’ and/or ‘conjunctive’. They almost always occupy the first part of the Theme.

4.3.2.1 Continuative

The continuative does not serve a function in the transitivity structure of the clause. Its main function is to indicate continuity with previous discourse, typically in dialogue, where it indicates that the speaker is ready to make his/her contribution or intends to continue his/her contribution in the dialogue as in (4.20).

(4.20)

he, ah		qù zhàoyìng go take care	nà wèi měiguó tàitài that MEAS America Mrs	ya. NTR: ass
	(Actor)	Process: material	Goal	
	(Subject)	Predicator	Complement	Negoti.
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

(Ah, to take care of that American lady.)

4.3.2.2 Conjunction

Conjunction provides a link back to the previous discourse, or sometimes forward to the following discourse, indicating the logico-semantic relationship between the connected clauses. It is usually placed after the Subject. However, it can be assigned thematic prominence by being placed first. It can be structural, i.e. a syntactically necessary element of a clause complex, or it can be non-structural. A non-structural conjunctive Theme is more thematically prominent than a structural one (Halliday & Hasan 1976; Halliday 1994).

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there are three major kinds of logico-semantic relationship, namely elaboration, extension and enhancement. First, in an elaborating relationship, one clause expands another, usually the previous one, by specifying or commenting on it (clarification) as in (4.21), exemplifying it (exemplification) as in (4.22), or restating it in other words (exposition) as in (4.23).

• **Elaboration: clarification**

(4.21)

<i>qíshí</i> actually	<i>tā</i> he	<i>bìngbù liáojiě</i> NEG know	<i>shì shí de zhēnxiàng</i> the matter ASSOC truth
CON	Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon
	Subject	Predicator	Complement
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(In fact, he did not know the truth of the matter.)

• **Elaboration: exemplification**

(4.22)

[[<i>dān zhéntàn de</i>]] being detective SUB	<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>shéme xìwéixiǎojié</i> whatever triviality	<i>dōu</i> also	<i>děi wèn</i> have to ask	<i>de.</i> EMP
Actor		Range	VADV	Process: material	
Subject		Complement	Adjunct	Predicator	
(topical) Theme	Rheme				

(‘Being a detective, one has to ask all kinds of trivial questions.)

<i>pírlú shuō,</i> for example	<i>nín</i> you	<i>kěyǐ gàosù</i> can tell	<i>wǒ</i> I
HCON	Sayer	Process: verbal	Receiver
	Subject	Predicator	Complement
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

[<i>nín de shuìpóu</i> you POSS night gown]	<i>shì</i> be	<i>shénme yánsè</i> what colour	<i>ma?</i> NTR: int
Carrier	Process: attributive	Attribute	
Subject	Predicator	Complement	Negotiator
(topical) Theme	Rheme		
Rheme of the previous clause			

(For example, can you tell me the colour of your nightgown?)

• **Elaboration: exposition**

(4.23)

<i>zhèyàng de huà,</i> in this case	<i>màikūn</i> MacQueen	<i>zǎojiù</i> had already	<i>zhīdào</i> know
HCON	Senser	VADV	Process: mental
	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(In this case, MacQueen knew of the note)

<i>yǒu</i> exist	<i>zhème gè zìtiào</i> such MEAS note
Process: existential	Existent
Predicator	Subject
(topical) Theme	Rheme
Rheme of the previous clause	

(there was a note)

<i>érqiě</i> and also		<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>jīngguò</i> experience	<i>fén-huǐ</i> burn-destroy	<i>le</i> ASP	<i>de</i> EMP
CON	(Goal)		Process: material			
	(Subject)		Predicator			
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme				
Rheme of the first clause						

(and also that it had been burnt.)

yějiúshìshuō, in other words	tā he	ruó if	bù shì NEG be	xiōngshǒu, murderer
CON	Token	CADV	Process: identifying	Value
	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
(textual)	Theme			
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

(In other words, if he was not the murderer,)

zhìshǎo at least		yě also	shì be	gòngfàn. accomplice
CON	(Token)	VADV	Process: identifying	Value
	(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
Rheme of the previous clause				
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

((he) was at least an accomplice of the murderer.)

Second, in an extending relationship, one clause expands a previous one by adding some new information (addition) as in (4.24), giving an exception to it (variation) as in (4.25), or offering an alternative (alternation) as in (4.26):

• Extension: addition

(4.24)

<i>huǒchē</i> train	<i>zài shíèr shí bàn zuōyòu</i> at twelve o'clock half about	<i>bèi</i> DISP: rec	<i>fēngxuě</i> snow	<i>kùnzhù le.</i> block ASP
Goal	Location: temporal		Actor	Process: material
Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct	Predicator	
(topical) Theme	Rheme			

(the train was blocked at about half past twelve.)

<i>ér</i> and	<i>zài nà shí zhīhòu,</i> at that time after	<i>rènhe rén</i> any people	<i>dōu</i> also	<i>bù kěnéng líkāi</i> NEG possible leave	<i>lièchē</i> train	<i>de.</i> EMP
CON	Location: temporal	Actor	VADV	Process: material	Range	
	Adjunct	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement	
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme				

(After that time, nobody could leave the train.)

• Extension: variation

(4.25)

<i>ránér</i> however	<i>dùbósīkè zhōngwèi zài zhíwù shàng de biǎoxiàn</i> Dubose Lieutenant at duty upon ASSOC performance
HCON	Carrier
	Subject
(textual)	(topical) Theme

<i>què</i> really	<i>shì</i> be	<i>yī fū dàzhàngfū de qìgài.</i> one MEAS manhood NOM spirit
VADV	Process: categorising	Attribute
Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
Rheme		

(However, Lieutenant Dubose performed his duty manfully.)

• Extension: alternation

(4.26)

‘wǒ I	yào wèn: have to ask	xiàmiàn next	gāi should	zěnmeyàng what	le? NTR: ass
Sayer	Process: verbal				
Subject	Predicator				Negotiator
(topi.) Theme		Carrier	Process: identifying	Attribute	
		Subject	Predicator	Complement	
		Rheme			

(‘I have to ask: what next?)

huòzhě or	wǒ I	yīnggāi should	shuō, say	xiàmiàn next	gāo lúndào should turn	shuí who	le?’ NTR: ass
CON	Sayer	Process: verbal					
	Subject	Predicator					Negotiator
(textual)	(topical) Theme		Carrier	Process: identifying	Attribute		
			Subject	Predicator	Comple.		
			Rheme				

(Or, should I say, who next?)

Third, in an enhancing relationship, one clause expands another by embellishing around it, by qualifying it with some circumstantial feature of time and/or space (spatial-temporal) as in (4.27), stating or comparing its way of accomplishment (manner) as in (4.28), or providing the cause or condition for it to accomplish (causal-conditional) as in (4.29).

• Enhancement: spatial-temporal

(4.27)

<i>hòulái</i> , afterward	<i>hǎoxiàng</i> look like	<i>zhè wèi bǐlìshí de shēngkè</i> this MEAS Belgium ASSOC stranger
HCON	VADV	Actor
	Adjunct	Subject
(textual)	(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme

<i>yuǎndào</i> far away	<i>zì yīngguó</i> from Britain	<i>gǎn le lái le</i> hurry ASP come ASP
VADV	Location: spatial	Process: material
Adjunct	Adjunct	Predicator
Rheme		

(Then, it seemed that this Belgium stranger came all the way from Britain hurriedly.)

• Enhancement: manner

(4.28)

<i>‘zhèng rú</i> exactly like	<i>wǒ</i> I	<i>xiàng nín</i> towards you	<i>bàogào</i> report	<i>de</i> , EMP
HCON	Sayer	Receiver	Process: verbal	
	Subject	Complement	Predicator	
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

(‘As I have reported to you,)

	<i>quán</i> totally	<i>kè mǎn le</i> customer full ASP
(Carrier)	VADV	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme	

((the whole train) is full.)

• Enhancement: causal-conditional

(4.29)

<i>yīncǐ</i> thus	<i>wǒmen</i> we	<i>wú fǎ bù zhèyàng</i> no way NEG such	<i>lùndìng</i> : conclude
CON	Senser	Manner	Process: mental
	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(We are thus forced to conclude ...)

<i>ruòshì</i> if	<i>dàiběnhàn xiǎojiě</i> Debenham Miss	<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>wúgu</i> innocent	<i>de</i> , EMP
HCON	Carrier		Process: ascriptive/Attribute	
	Subject		Predicator	
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

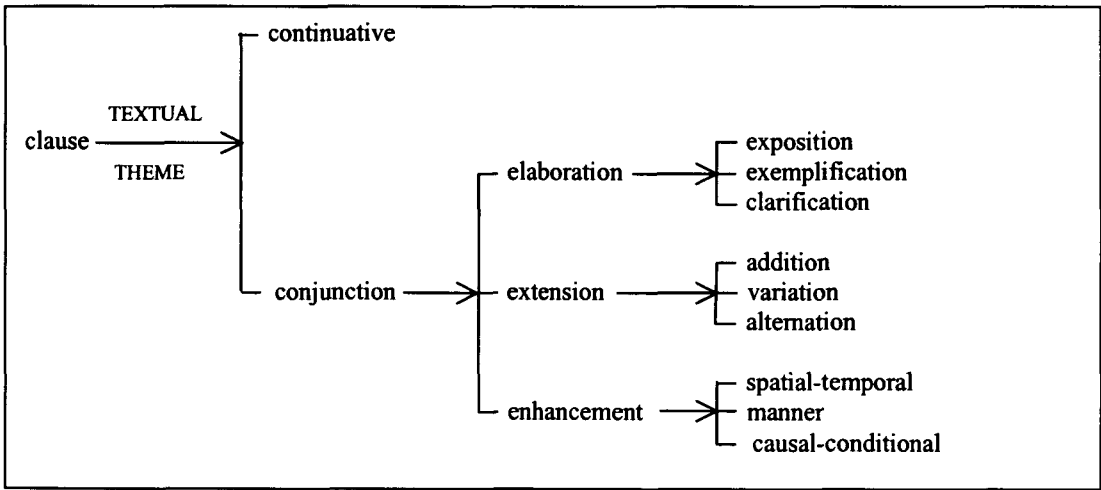
(if Miss Debenham is innocent,)

<i>tā</i> she	<i>bù huì yǐnmán</i> would not conceal	<i>zhì xiàng shìshí</i> this MEAS fact
Actor	Process: material	Goal
Subject	Predicator	Complement
(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(why did she conceal that fact?)

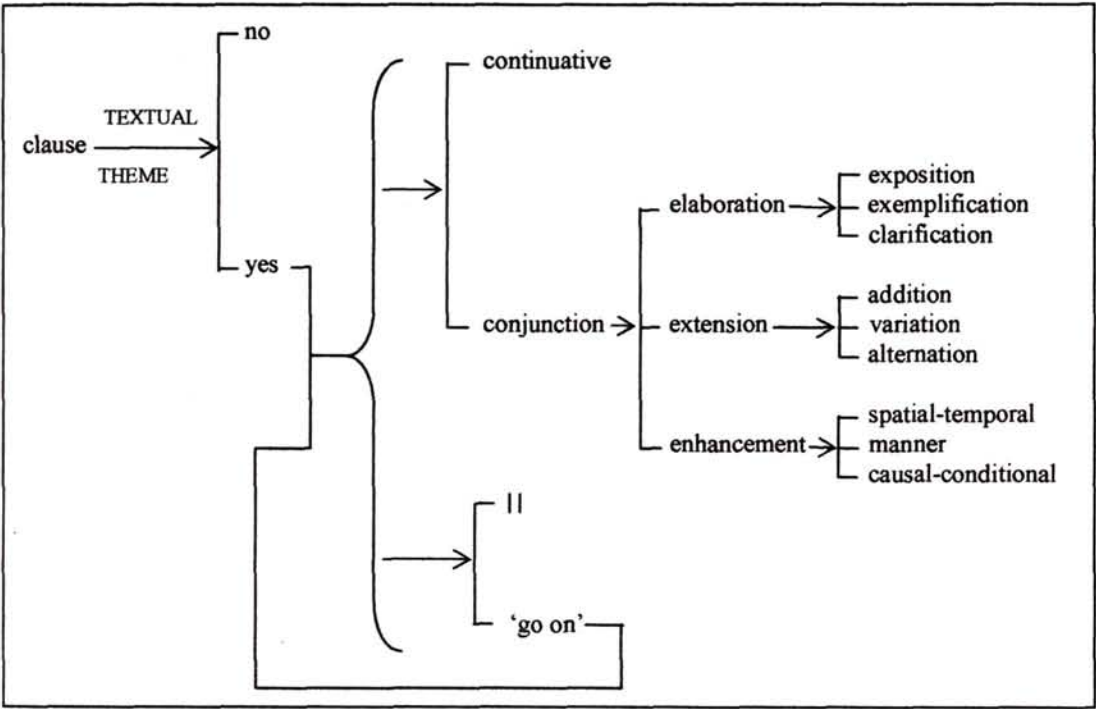
These distinctions among ‘continuative’ and ‘conjunction’, which are categorised into ‘elaboration’, ‘extension’ and ‘enhancement’, are summarised in Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13: A tentative system of TEXTUAL THEME



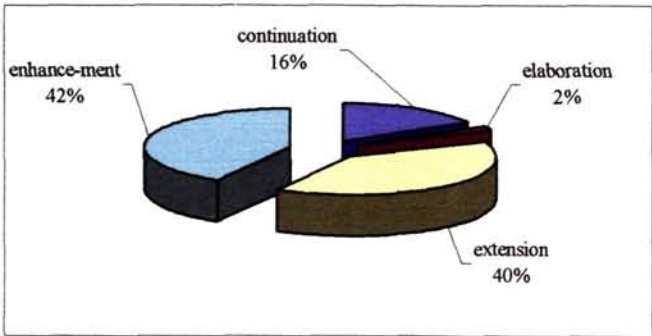
However, both ‘continuative’ and ‘conjunction’ can present simultaneously as textual Theme in the same clause. In addition, more than one type of ‘conjunction’ can also present as textual Theme in the same clause. These characteristics are captured in a second simultaneous system, [go on/-]. At this point, the system of textual theme can be shown as in Figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14: The grammatical system of TEXTUAL THEME



Conjunctive Theme is more frequent than continuative Theme in the corpus. Amongst the conjunctive Themes, textual Theme of elaboration is much less frequent than textual Themes of extension and enhancement. The proportion that each subtype of textual Theme represents out of the total number of textual Themes in the corpus is displayed in Figure 4.15.

Figure 4.15: Proportion of various textual Themes



4.3.3 Interpersonal Theme

Purely interpersonal elements of the clause also contribute thematic material; they are known as interpersonal Theme. If both textual Theme and interpersonal Theme exist, the typical sequence is textual ^ interpersonal ^ topical. Interpersonal Theme shows a certain attitude of the speaker/writer. It can be any combination of (1) vocative, (2) modal adjunct, (3) interrogative and/or (4) polarity.

4.3.3.1 Vocative

A vocative identifies the addressee in an exchange. It is typically (but not necessarily) a personal name. It is usually thematic and is thus placed in clause-initial position such as (4.30).

(4.30)

<i>'ābósīnuò shāngxiào,</i> Arbuthnot Colonel	<i>dàiběnhàn xiǎojiě</i> Debenham Miss	<i>huòxǔ</i> perhaps
	Carrier	VADV
Vocative	Subject	Adjunct
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

<i>kěyǐ chēngzhīwèi</i> can be called	<i>yī wèi fēicháng kěyí de rénwù.</i> one MEAS very suspicious NOM character
Process: categorising	Attribute
Predicator	Complement
Rheme (continued)	

(Colonel Arbuthnot, Miss Debenham can perhaps be called a highly suspicious character.)

4.3.3.2 Modal adjunct

Modal Adjuncts include both comment and modality Adjuncts. They specify the speaker’s attitude, i.e. comment and assessment, towards the proposition expressed in the clause as in the following examples.

• Comment

(4.31)

<i>dāngrán</i> of course		<i>zài zhè zhǒng shìqíng shāng</i> at this MEAS matter upon	<i>zhōngguī</i> eventually	<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>nánmiǎn</i> unavoidable	<i>de.</i> EMP
	(Carrier)	Matter	VADV		Process: ascriptive/ Attribute	
	(Subject)	Adjunct	Adjunct		Predicator	
(interpersonal)	((topical) Theme)	Rheme				

((Rumour) of course was unavoidable in this sort of matter.)

• Modality

Modality includes two types of assessment, namely modalisation of proposition and modulation of proposal. Modalisation expresses either degrees of usuality as in (4.32) or degrees of probability as in (4.33), whereas modulation assesses either degrees of obligation as in (4.34) or degrees of inclination (for English, see Halliday 1985, 1994; for Chinese, see Zhu 1996 and Chapter 3 of this thesis). There is no instance of interpersonal Theme in the corpus which shows a degree of inclination.

Degrees of usuality

(4.32)

<i>rúguǒ</i> if	<i>yī gè rén</i> one MEAS person	<i>dào le</i> reach ASP	[[<i>yǒu chóudí de</i>]] possess enemy SUB <i>shēnfēn,</i> status
HCON	Actor	Process: material	Range
	Subject	Predicator	Complement
Theme			
(textual)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(If a person is in a position to have enemies,)

<i>wǎngwǎng</i> usually	<i>chóurén</i> enemy	<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>bù zhǐ yī gè</i> NEG only one MEAS	<i>de.</i> EMP
VADV	Carrier		Process: ascriptive/Attribute	
Adjunct	Subject		Complement	
Rheme of the previous clause				
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

(usually the number of enemies is more than one.)

Degrees of probability

(4.33)

<i>fěicháng kěnéng,</i> very probable	<i>mùgàncái</i> murder case	<i>huì</i> possible	<i>yǔ jīntiān zǎochén</i> at today morning	<i>zài yìdàlì biǎnjìng</i> at Italy border
	Goal	VADV	Location: temporal	Location: spatial
Adjunct	Subject	Adjunct	Adjunct	Adjunct
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		

<i>bèi</i> DISP: rec	<i>rén</i> people	<i>fāxiàn.</i> discover
	Actor	Process: material
Adjunct		Predicator
Rheme (continued)		

(Probably, the murder will possibly be discovered this morning at the border of Italy.)

Degrees of obligation

(4.34)

‘wǒ I	yào wèn: have to ask	xiàmiàn next	gāi should	zěnmeyàng what	le? NTR: ass
Sayer	Process: verbal				
Subject	Predicator				Negotiator
(topi.) Theme		Carrier	Process: identifying	Attribute	
		Subject	Predicator	Complement	
		Rheme			

(‘I have to ask: what next?)

<i>huòzhě</i> or	<i>wǒ</i> I	<i>yīnggāi</i> should	<i>shuō,</i> say	<i>xiàmiàn</i> next	<i>gāo lúndào</i> should turn	<i>shuí</i> who	<i>le?'</i> NTR: ass
CON	Sayer	Process: verbal					
	Subject	Predicator					Negotiator
(textual)	(topical) Theme		Carrier	Process: identifying	Attribute		
			Subject	Predicator	Comple.		
			Rheme				

(Or, should I say, who next?)

4.3.3.3 Interrogative

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the elemental interrogative is characterised by the presence of an interrogative element in the clause, which usually occupies the same position in the clause as the element being queried would have in the corresponding declarative clause. However, the data show that *wèishénme* (why) can be assigned thematic prominence as in (4.35).

(4.35)

<i>wèishénme</i> Q-why	<i>dàiběnhàn</i> Debenham	<i>xiǎojiě</i> Miss	<i>yào</i> have to	<i>duì wǒ</i> towards I	<i>sǎhuǎng?</i> lie
Cause	Actor	Pro-	Range	-cess: material	
Adjunct	Subject	Pre-	Complement	-dicator	
(interpersonal & topical) Theme	Rheme				

(Why did Miss Debenham lie to me?)

4.3.3.4 Polarity

POLARITY was interpreted as an interpersonal system in Chapter 3. So *shì* (yes) and *bù* (*shì*) (no) are interpersonal Themes when they are responses to a polar interrogative or when they contradict an interactant in an exchange. However, if they serve a continuative function by maintaining the current polarity, they are textual Themes instead of interpersonal ones. Clause (4.36) is an answer to a polar interrogative while (4.37) is used to contradict an interactant by negotiating the polarity in the exchange.

• Polarity: positive

(4.36)

<i>‘shì ya,</i> yes	<i>yīsitǎnbǎo zhè gè dūshì</i> Stamboul this MEAS city	<i>wǒ</i> I	<i>huán</i> still	<i>měi dào gūo</i> NEG: pf visit ASP	<i>ne,</i> NTR: ass
	Range	Actor	VADV	Process: material	
	Complement	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Negotiator
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme			

(‘Yes, Stamboul I have never been to before.)

• Polarity: negative

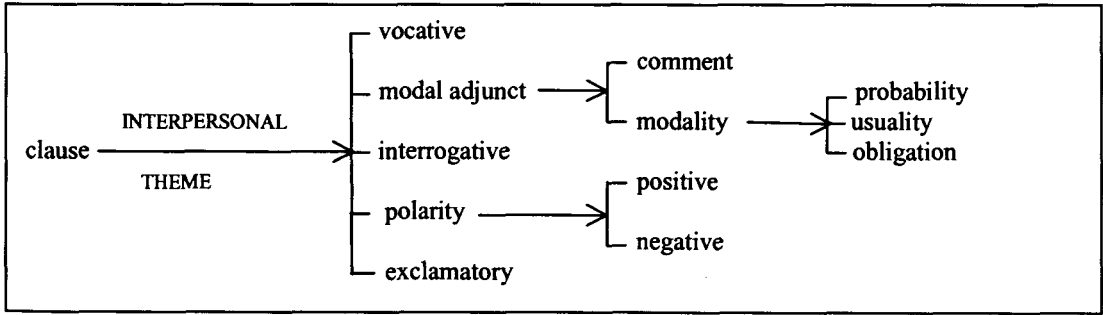
(4.37)

<i>bù,</i> no	<i>xiǎojiě</i> Miss		<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>jiǎ</i> false	<i>de.</i> EMP
		(Carrier)		Process: ascriptive/Attribute	
	Vocative	(Subject)		Predicator	
(interpersonal)		((topical) Theme)	Rheme		

(‘No, Miss, (it) was false / (what you said) is false.’)

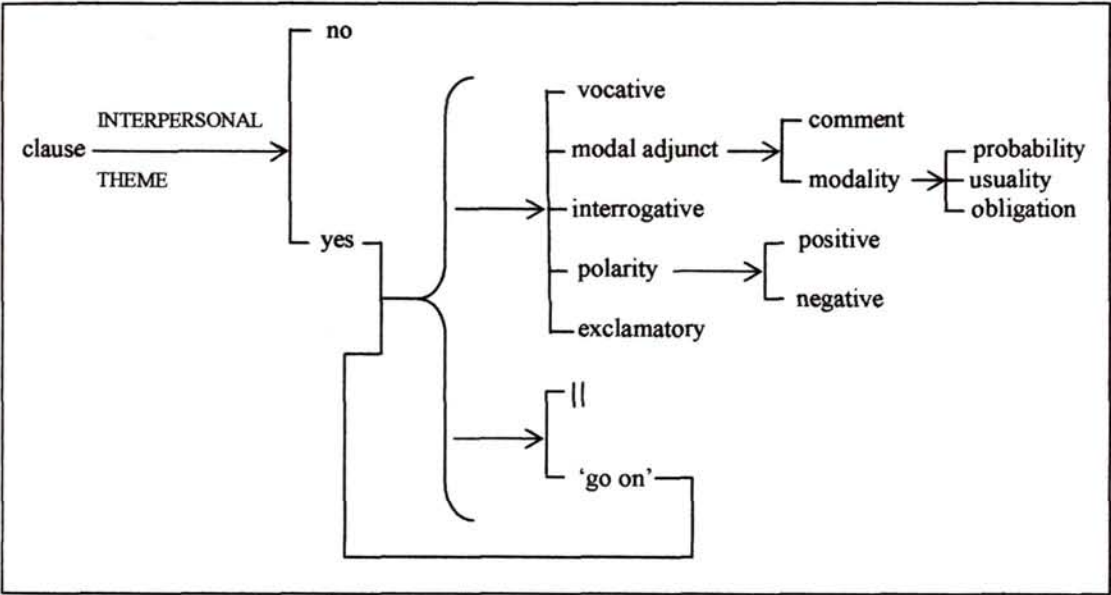
These distinctions among vocative, modal Adjunct, interrogative, polarity and their sub-categories can be formulated systemically as in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16: A tentative system of INTERPERSONAL THEME



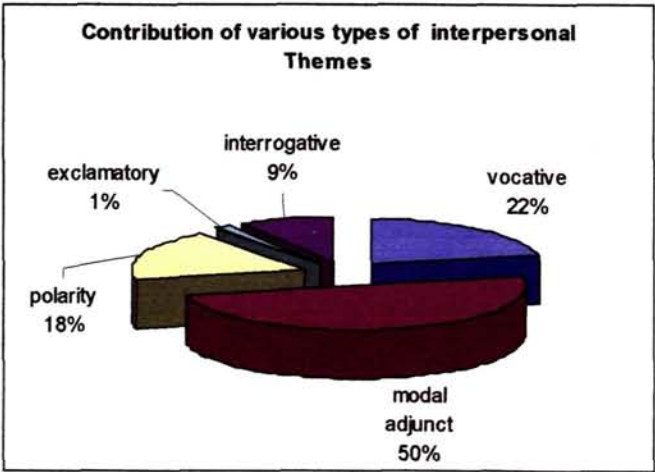
As in the case of textual Theme, more than one type of the above purely interpersonal element can be presented as interpersonal Theme in a clause. A second simultaneous system, [go on/-], is introduced to capture this characteristic. At this point the system of INTERPERSONAL THEME can now be formulated as in Figure 4.17.

Figure 4.17: The grammatical system of INTERPERSONAL THEME



The number of instances that each subtype of interpersonal Theme represents out of the total number of interpersonal Theme in the Chinese corpus is displayed in Figure 4.18.

Figure 4.18: Proportion of various types of interpersonal Theme



4.3.4 Other thematisation strategies

In additional to the above resources, the grammar of Chinese provides other strategies for thematisation. These strategies, namely absolute Theme, identified Theme (thematic bracketing) and predicated Theme will be examined in this section.

4.3.4.1 Absolute Theme

In Chinese, there exists a strategy for specifying or changing the referential context of a clause, resembling what Matthiessen (1995: 552) called ‘Theme Matter’ in his description of English; the Theme is specified as the textual ‘subject matter’ and serves no roles in the ideational and interpersonal metafunction. It is always marked off by a pause in spoken Putonghua and sometimes a comma in written text. It may be highlighted by a theme particle like *a*, *ni*, *he*, *ma* etc. It is related to the rest of the clause either by lexical cohesion or by making a reference to one of the wordings in the clause. In the former, the Theme and the wording usually, but not always, exhibit a part-whole relationship as in (4.38):

(4.38)

<i>zhè rén</i> this person	<i>quán shēn</i> whole body		<i>yùhán zhuāngshù</i> against cold clothing
	Actor	(Process: material)	Goal
	Subject	(Predicator)	Complement
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(This person, his/her whole body was covered with heavy clothing.)

When the absolute Theme is identical to a particular interpersonal or representational role, this interpersonal or ideational element will often be picked up by a pronoun as in (4.39):

(4.39)

<i>nǐ de lǎobǎn luójiádè xiānshēng.</i> you POSS boss Ratchett Mr	<i>tā</i> he	<i>sǐ le.</i> dead ASP
	Carrier	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
	Subject	Predicator
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(Your boss, Mr. Ratchett, he is dead.)

This property distinguishes it from another type of marked Theme, namely Complement Theme, in which the Theme is conflated with a participant other than the Subject as in (4.40).

(4.40)

<i>bàilúo</i> Poirot	<i>shuō,</i> said,
Sayer	Process: verbal
Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme

“ <i>dīgēngsī xiǎoshuō</i> “ Dicken novel	<i>wǒ</i> I	<i>shú de hěn.”</i> familiar CC very
Phenomenon	Senser	Process: mental
Complement	Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
Rheme (continued)		

(Poirot said, “Dickens’s novel I’m very familiar with.”)

The absolute Theme can be preceded by a preposition as in (4.41):

(4.41)

<i>zhìyǔ</i> as to	[[<i>liǎng rén dào dǐ tán de</i>]] two people in fact talk SUB	<i>shè</i> be	<i>shēnme</i> , what,	
HCON	Token	Process: identifying	Value	
	Subject	Predicator	Complement	
	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
	(absolute) Theme			

(As to what the two were talking about,)

<i>dùbósīkè</i> Dubose	<i>réng</i> still	<i>méng zài gǔ lǐ</i> , cover at drum inside
Carrier	VADV	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(absolute) (topical) Theme	Rheme	

(Dubose was still in the dark.)

In this example, the absolute Theme is a rankshifted clause, *liǎng rén dào dǐ tán de shè shēnme* (what the two were talking about), marked by the preposition *zhìyǔ* (as to), indicating that it is the ‘subject matter’ of the clause. In addition, it is separated from the clause by a comma. Apart from *zhìyǔ* as in this example, the most common prepositions to be marked off as absolute Theme include *duìyǔ*, *guānyǔ* and *yǎo guān*.

A clause with absolute Theme can be analysed as having two layers of thematic structure (cf. Tsao 1979) as shown in (4.42).

(4.42)

<i>nǐ de lǎobǎn luójiádè xiānshēng,</i> you POSS boss Ratchett Mr	<i>tā</i> he	<i>sì le.</i> dead ASP
	Carrier	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
	Subject	Predicator
Theme	Rheme	
	Theme	Rheme

(Your boss, Mr. Ratchett, he is dead.)

And there can be more than two layers of thematic structure in Chinese. A frequently quoted example is (4.43).

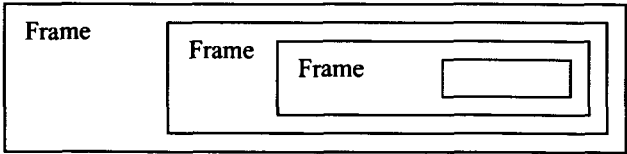
(4.43)

<i>zhè zhǒng shù</i> this MEAS tree	<i>yèzǐ</i> leaf	<i>yánsè</i> colour	<i>hěn měili</i> very beautiful
Theme	Rheme		
	Theme	Rheme	
		Theme	Rheme

(The colour of the leaves on this tree is very beautiful.)

Multiple layering is one of the reasons why Her (1990) prefers to use the term ‘frame’ instead of ‘theme’. Her analyses the above example as shown in (4.44).

(4.44) *zhè zhǒng shù yèzǐ yánsè hěn měili*
this MEAS tree leaf colour very beautiful



However, the term ‘frame’ is not a suitable one because of its connotational connotations. In this thesis, absolute Theme is analysed as in (4.45) so that the two layer thematic structure is reserved for clause complex and discourse.

(4.45)

<i>nǐ de lǎobǎn luójiádè xiānshēng,</i> you POSS boss Ratchett Mr	<i>tā</i> he	<i>sǐ le.</i> dead ASP
	Carrier	Process/Attribute
	Subject	Predicator
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme

(Your boss, Mr. Ratchett, he is dead.)

4.3.4.2 Identified Theme (thematic bracketing)

Thematic bracketing, i.e. setting off a particular portion of the clause as thematic by structural means, is achieved by nominalising the verbal group or some combination of elements that includes the verbal group and adding the subordinating particle *de* at the end. This is then joined to the remaining element(s) with the relational verb *shè* (be), resulting in an identifying (equative) clause (Halliday & McDonald in press). This closely resembles Theme identification in English. Using one of the examples in Section 4.3.4.1, I will illustrate thematic bracketing by bolding the elements in the absolute Theme in (4.46).

(4.46)

zh'yǔ as to	[[<i>liǎng rén dào dǐ tán de</i>]] two people in fact talk SUB	shè be	shēnme, what,	
HCON	Token	Process: identifying	Value	
	Subject	Predicator	Complement	
	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
	(absolute) Theme			

(As to what the two were talking about,)

<i>dùbósikè</i> Dubose	<i>réng</i> still	<i>méng zài gǔ lǐ,</i> cover at drum inside
Carrier	VADV	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(absolute) (topical) Theme	Rheme	

(Dubose was still in the dark.)

4.3.4.3 Predicated Theme

According to Li & Thompson (1981: 154), the copula *shi* can function as a marker of ‘special affirmation’ as in (4.47).

(4.47)

<i>‘wǒ</i> I	<i>xiǎng,</i> think
Senser	Process: mental
Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme
metaphorical realisation of subjective probability	

(I think...)

<i>nín</i> you	<i>zài nàlǐ</i> at there	<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>yào tíng</i> want stop	<i>jǐtiān</i> several days	<i>de</i> EMP	<i>ba?</i> NTR: int
Actor	Place (deictic)		Process: material	Range		
Subject	Adjunct		Predicator	Complement		Negotiator
(topical) Theme	Rheme					

(you would want to stay there for several days.)

As the translation indicates, the *shì* ... (*de*) construction can mean ‘It is true that ...’ or ‘It is that...’ This construction is used to affirm what had been said earlier or what had been suspected by the speaker. Some linguists interpret the construction as a sort of emphatic structure and the copula *shì* is considered an ‘emphatic marker’ (see Tiee 1990; Cheung et al. 1996). Sometimes, the copula *shì* can be placed before the Subject such as in (4.48):

(4.48)

<i>Wǒ</i> I	<i>rèndìng,</i> sure
Senser	Process: mental
Subject	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme
metaphorical realization of subjective probability	

(I think ...)

<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>ānjūnyè</i> Andrenyi	<i>bójué</i> Count	<i>dài tā fūrén</i> replace he wife	<i>xià le shǒu.</i> take- ASP -action
	Actor		Beneficiary	Process: material
	Subject		Complement	Predicator
Theme			Rheme	

(it is Count Andrenyi who took the action for his wife.)

In this case, the construction closely resembles theme predication as in English. This construction is also found in interrogative clauses as in (4.49).

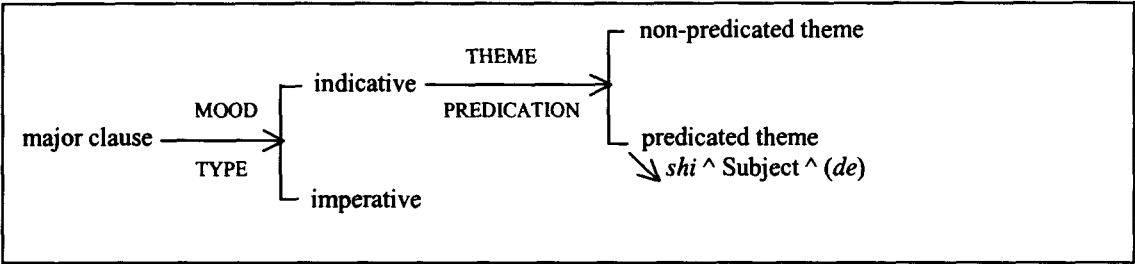
(4.49)

<i>shì</i> EMP	<i>tā</i> she	<i>zhèyàng</i> that	<i>duì nǐ</i> to you	<i>shuō guò</i> say ASP	<i>ma?</i> NTR: int
	Sayer	Verbiage	Receiver	Process: verbal	
	Subject	Complement	Complement	Predicator	Negotiator
Theme		Rheme			

(Is it she who told you that?)

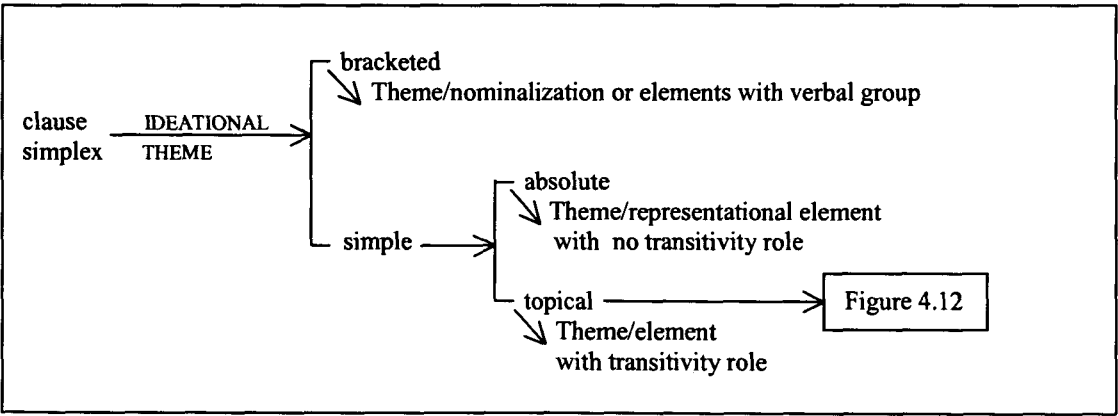
In the corpus, the *shè* ^ Subject construction occurs in indicative clauses, both declarative and interrogative ones. However, there is no indication that this construction occurs in imperative clauses. Theme predication can be formulated systemically as in Figure 4.19.

Figure 4.19: Theme predication



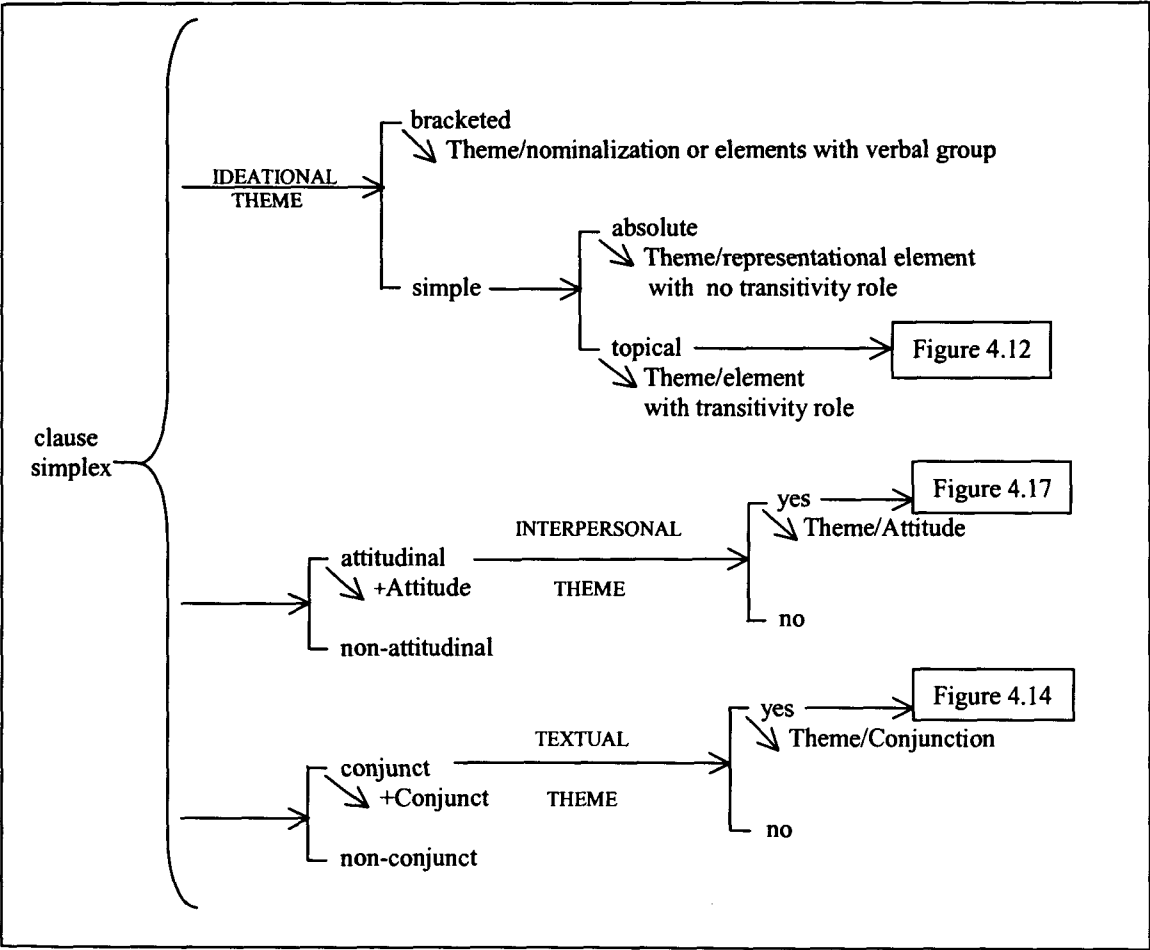
At this point, including the notions of bracketing Theme and absolute Theme, an expanded network of IDEATIONAL THEME can now be formulated as in Figure 4.20.

Figure 4.20: The system of IDEATIONAL THEME



To conclude our discussion of the system of THEME in Chinese, we found that each of the three metafunctional components of the content plane may contribute thematic material and therefore, there are three simultaneous subsystems, namely the systems of TEXTUAL THEME, INTERPERSONAL THEME and IDEATIONAL THEME which can be formulated systemically into a system network of THEME as in Figure 4.21.

Figure 4.21: A comprehensive system network of THEME

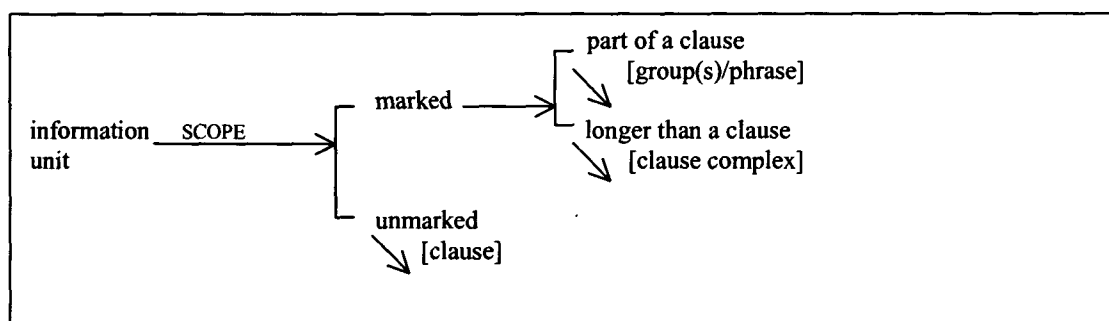


4.4 A note on information focus

4.4.1 The information unit and structure

As mentioned, the wave of information is formed by a succession of alternating troughs and peaks of news prominence. Putonghua in mainland China is foot-time⁶, just like English. “From below” information units can be recognised phonologically in terms of ‘tone groups’. This means that an information unit can be longer or shorter than a clause, thus making it ‘marked’, though it is usually coincides with a clause, making it ‘unmarked’. This type of ‘markedness’ in respect of the scope of information can be formulated systemically as in Figure 4.22.

Figure 4.22: The system of SCOPE



An information unit contains varying degrees of information a speaker wishes to convey. The focus of information, i.e. the culmination of the New, is the most important information from the speaker’s point of view. This means that it is that part of a unit to which the speaker invites the hearer to attend. According to Halliday & McDonald (in press: 309), it is realised by:

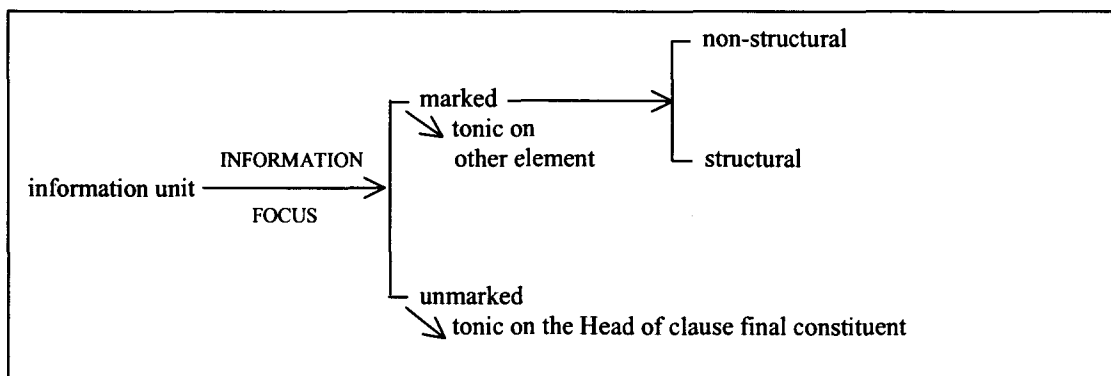
a word in which the accented syllable(s) is or are prominent. Since most accented syllables in Mandarin have lexical tone (one or other of four tonal contours, this being part of the Rhyme of the syllable), such prominence is produced by maximal pitch movement on the relevant tone (maximum

⁶ But this varies across dialects; for instance, in Singapore it is syllable-timed.

stretching of the tone register), more or less to the point which is attained in citation form.

In short the focus of New information is realised by the Tonic.⁷ The tonic prominence occurs typically at the end of the information unit (see Ho 1993; Halliday & McDonald in press). That means, Given ^ New is the 'unmarked' pattern in Chinese. But there are some devices to indicate a 'marked' focus in Chinese. The first device is to move the tonic forward to an element not occupying the clause final position. This, however, is restricted to spoken discourse and since this thesis is concerned with written texts, I will leave this device for the future study and instead focus on another type of device for 'marked' focus, namely structural devices. These distinctions among marked focus and unmarked focus, structural device and non-structural device are formulated systemically in Figure 4.23.

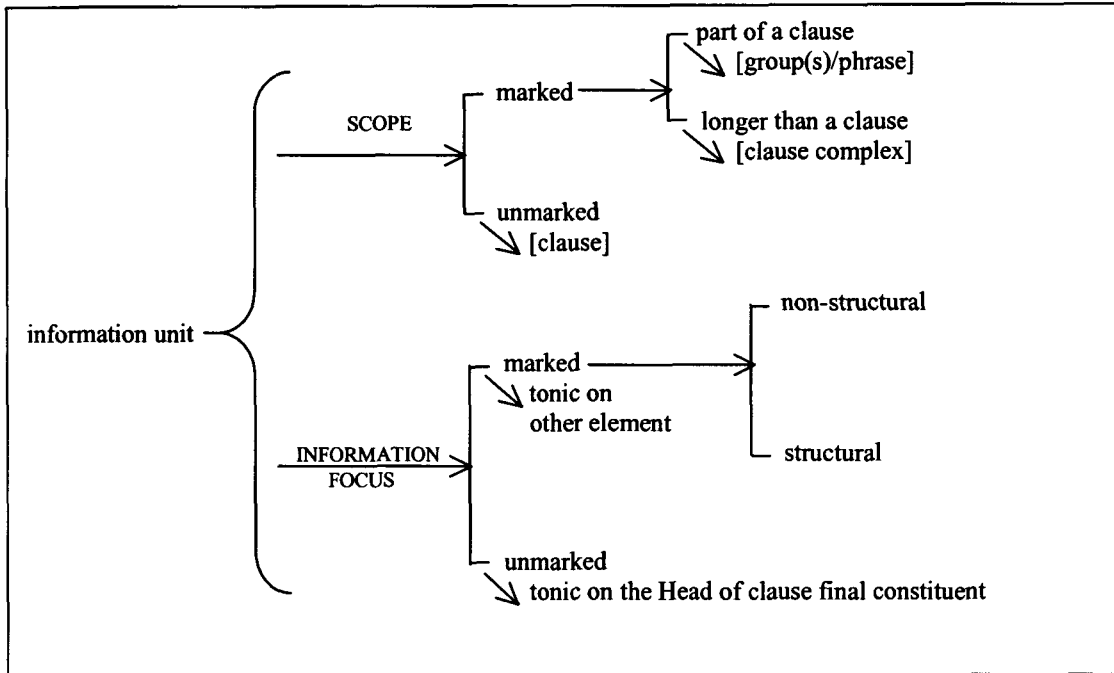
Figure 4.23: The system of INFORMATION FOCUS



At this point, two simultaneous subsystems are proposed which are represented as a network in Figure 4.24.

⁷ Structuralist accounts this as a stress, or "grammatical stress" in Chao's (1968: 35) terms. Ho (1993: 85) calls it a "structural stress". According to Matthiessen (p.c.), the account of stress often fails to differentiate between rhythm (Ictus ^ Remise) and intonational prominence (Tonic – in (Pretonic ^ Tonic)).

Figure 4.24: Two central systems of INFORMATION



4.4.2 Contrasting parallel clauses

Parallelism is not merely structural repetition in Chinese but is a resource for the speaker to repeat, to paraphrase, to contrast, to further elaborate and to repair a message. The repeated part, as the term suggests, contains known information, i.e. the Given in the information unit. The additional part, theoretically speaking, contains new information and becomes the focus of information. In spoken Putonghua, it is also the element stressed, which means that it is assigned news prominence. For instance, *xiānzài* (now) in the second clause of (4.50) and *wǒmen* (we) in the fourth clause of (4.51) are the elements carrying news prominence. Similarly, an alternative term, like *zhè yīqiē* (all these) in the fourth clause of (4.50), which contrasts with its counterpart in the parallel construction, also naturally becomes the focus in the clause. Both addition and alternation in clauses marked by parallelism contrast information and contrasted information is always under focus and is usually stressed.

(4.50)

(this)	<i>bù chéng,</i> NEG possible
(Carrier)	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
(Subject)	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme
(Given)	← New

((This is) impossible.)

(this)	<i>xiànzài</i> now	<i>bù chéng.</i> NEG possible
(Carrier)	Time (deictic)	Process: ascriptive/Attribute
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
Gi-	← New	-ven

((This is) impossible now.)

(4.51)

(you)	<i>děng</i> wait	<i>shì</i> matter	<i>wán le</i> finish ASP
(Actor)	Pro-	Range	-cess: acting
(Subject)	Pre-	Complement	-dicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme		
Given	← New		

	<i>zài</i> again	<i>shuō</i> ; say
(Actor)	VADV	Process: behaviour
(Subject)	Adjunct	Predicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme	
(Given)	← New	

((You) wait till the matter has finished before (you) raise (it) again.)

(you)	<i>děng</i> wait	<i>zhè yīqiè</i> this everything	<i>dōu</i> also	<i>wán le</i> finish ASP
(Actor)	Pro-	Range	VADV	-cess: acting
(Subject)	Pre-	Complement	Adjunct	-dicator
((topical) Theme)	Rheme			
Gi-	← New		-ven	

<i>wǒmen</i>	<i>zài</i> again	<i>shuō</i> ; say
Actor	VADV	Process: behaviour
Subject	Adjunct	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme	
New	Given	

((You) wait till the matter has finished before (you) raise (it) again.)

4.4.3 Emphatic particles

Some conjunctions and adverbs in Chinese such as *lián* (even), *wúlùn / bùlùn...*(*dōu*) (no matter how, what, where etc), *zhǐyǒu* (only) can be used to signal the focus of information. Their emphatic function is recognised in traditional grammar but the structures that they form are usually studied separately. For instance, in the *lián ... (dōu/yě)* construction, the element embodied in the construction is the focus of information whether it has been mentioned or not; it is presented as the focus by the speaker, or it is being 'emphasised' in traditional terms. This means that although it might not be some newly introduced information, it is nevertheless treated as New in the message as in (4.52).

(4.52)

<i>zhè rén</i> this person	<i>quán shēn</i> whole body		<i>yùhán</i> <i>zhuāngshù</i> , against cold clothing
	Actor	(Process: Material)	Goal
	Subject	(Predicator)	Complement
(absolute)	(topical) Theme	Rheme	

(This person, his/her whole body was covered with heavy clothing.)

<i>lián</i> even (EMP)	<i>ěrdou</i> ear	<i>yě</i> also	<i>dài-shàng le</i> wear ASP	<i>ěrmào</i> , ear muffs
	Actor	VADV	Process: material	Range
	Subject	Adjunct	Predicator	Complement
(interpersonal)	(topical) Theme	Rheme		
New			Given	

(even his ears were covered with ear muffs.)

4.4.4 *Wh*-type interrogative elements

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the question element of the elemental interrogative occupies the same position as the element about which information is sought. An elemental interrogative seeks specific information about a particular element. According to Ho (1993), question elements are invariably stressed in spoken Putonghua and thus they are the focus of information. Their information structure is shown below.

(4.53)

<i>jīntiān zǎoshàng</i> today morning	<i>nǐ</i> you	<i>wèishénme</i> Q-why	<i>yào</i> have to	<i>duì wǒmen</i> towards we	<i>shuōhuǎng?</i> lying
Location: temporal	Actor	Cause		Range	Process: behavioural
Adjunct	Subject	Adjunct		Complement	Predicator
(topical) Theme	Rheme				
Gi-		New			-ven

(This morning, why did you lie to us?)

For thematic reasons, the *Wh*-type question word can be placed in clause-initial position as in (4.54). In this case, it is the element carrying both thematic and new prominence.

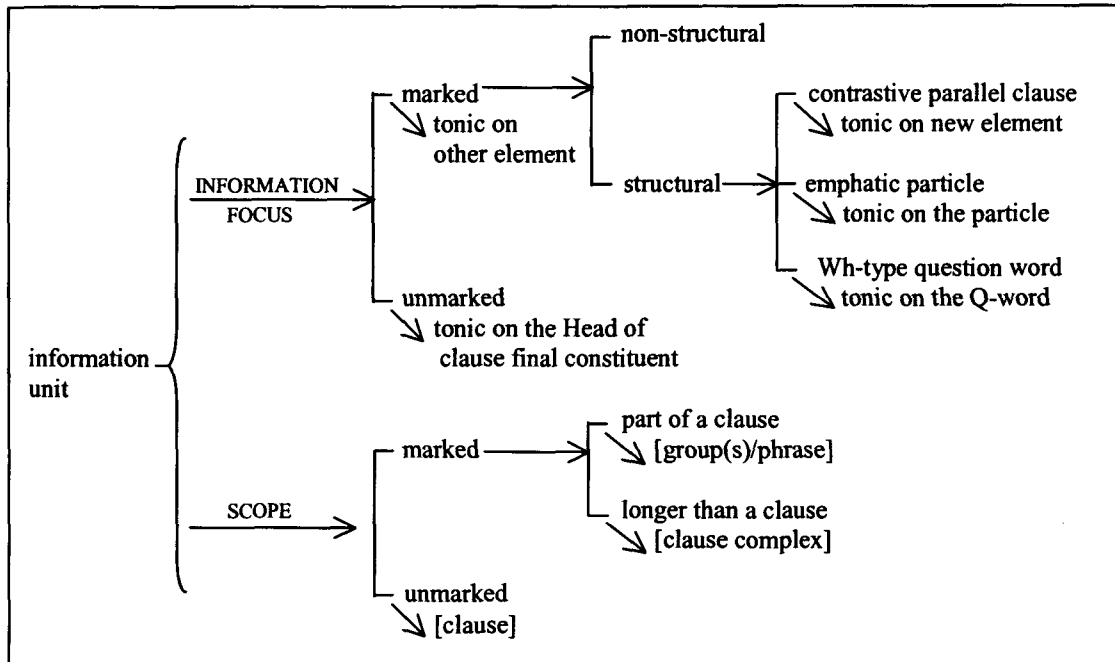
(4.54)

<i>wèishénme</i> Q-why	<i>dàiběnhàn xiǎojiě</i> Debenham Miss	<i>yào</i> have to	<i>duì wǒ</i> towards I	<i>sǎhuǎng?</i> 'lie
Cause	Actor		Range	Process: behaviour
Adjunct	Subject		Complement	Predicator
(interpersonal + topical) Theme	Rheme			
New	Given			

(Why did Miss Debenham lie to me?)

At this point the marked structural information focus has been expanded and an expanded system of INFORMATION can be formulated systemically as in Figure 4.25.

Figure 4.25: The system of INFORMATION



4.5 Contrastive analysis of the system of THEME in Chinese and English

In this section, the central concern is the similarities and differences between the systems of THEME in the two languages. As in Chapters 2 and 3, the comparisons here are also approached from the three angles: from above, around and below. In addition the relative frequency with which the various options in the system networks have been chosen in the corpus will also be compared.

The system of THEME in English has been explored thoroughly in many publications (Fries 1983; Martin 1983; Halliday 1985/1994; Eggins 1990; Matthiessen 1995; Martin, Matthiessen & Painter 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen 1997). The system networks of THEME in English as shown in Figures 4.26-29 are based on my analysis of the English corpus, with reference to the description in Martin (1983), Halliday (1985), Halliday &

Matthiessen 1997) and particularly Matthiessen (1995). They are contrasted with the system network of THEME in Chinese as shown in Figures 4.13, 4.16, 4.19 and 4.20.

Figure 4.26: A comprehensive system network of THEME in English

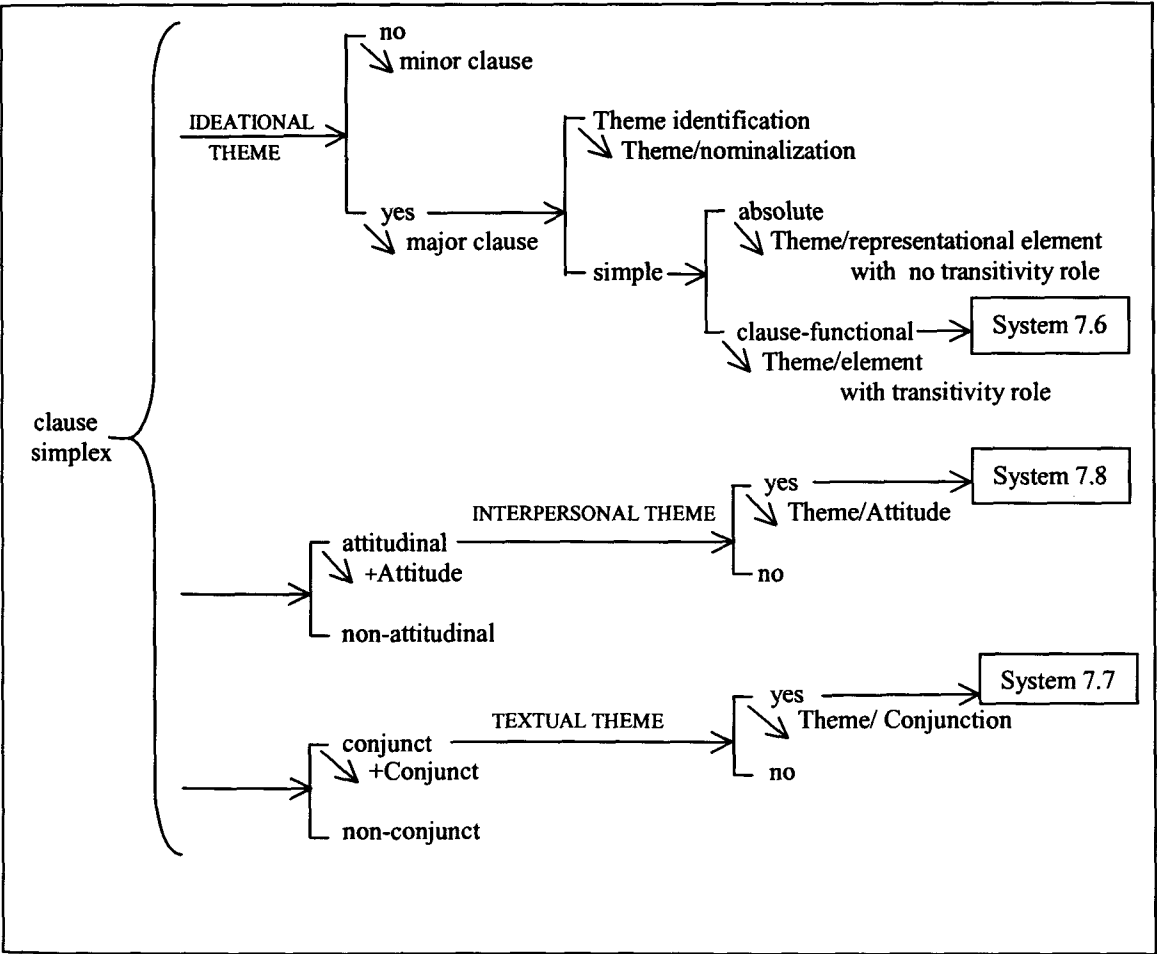


Figure 4.27: The system of TOPICAL THEME in English

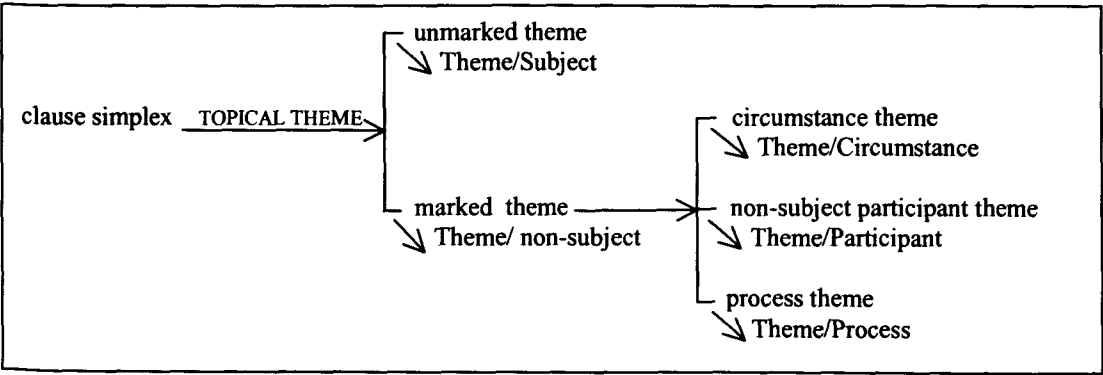


Figure 4.28: The system of TEXTUAL THEME in English

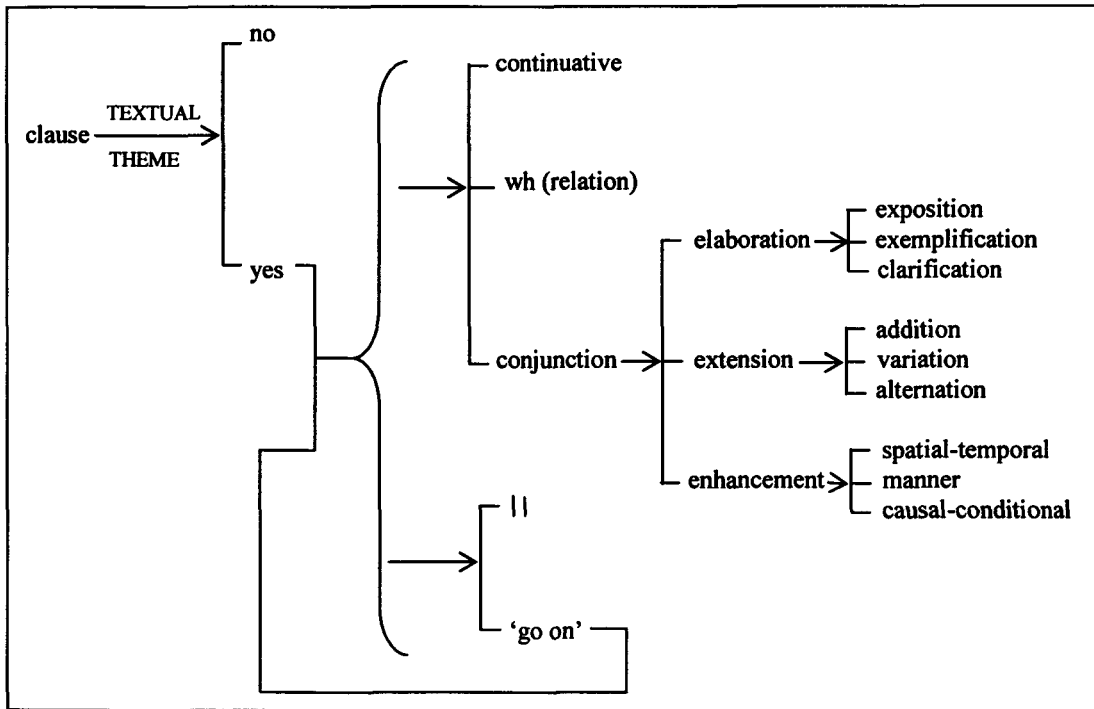
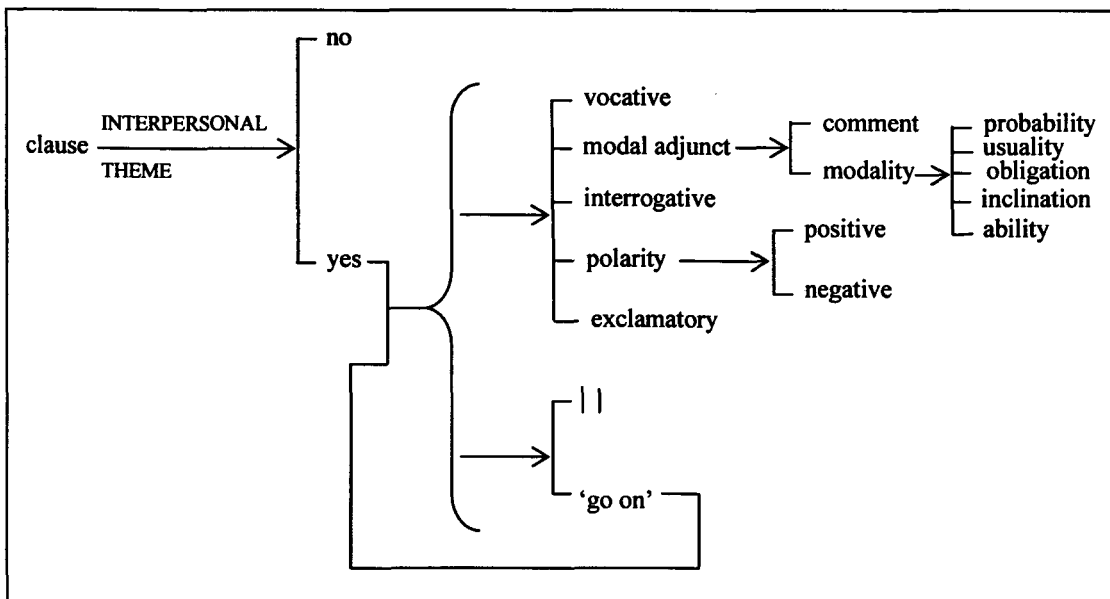


Figure 4.29: The system of INTERPERSONAL THEME in English



4.5.1 Approaching the system from around

Some options are available in the system network of THEME in English but not in Chinese. First, the 'wh (relative)' element is textual Theme in English but not in Chinese. As mentioned in Section 3.5.3, the data only includes two situations in which the interrogative elements can form part of the Theme: (1) when the interrogative element is *wèishénme* (why), it can occupy thematic position in the marked case; and (2) when the interrogative element is *shuí* (who), it is the Subject of the clause and therefore occupies thematic position in the unmarked case. However, in both cases, the interrogative elements are interpreted as interpersonal + topical Theme instead of textual Theme as in English.

Second, the modal Adjunct of inclination and ability can take up thematic position in English but there is no occurrence in the data to suggest that they can be interpersonal Theme in Chinese.

4.5.2 Approaching the system from above

The absence of the choices 'wh (relative)', 'inclination' and 'ability' in the Chinese THEME system means that these elements cannot be given thematic prominence. This in turn affects the pattern of information flow (see Section 6.7).

4.5.3 Approaching the system from below

In textual Themes the wh- elements in relative clauses in English usually take up clause-initial position whereas Chinese does not have a wh- element in relative clauses. In interpersonal Themes the difference between Chinese and English arises in interrogative clauses. In English the Finite in polar interrogative clauses and the wh- element in wh-interrogative clauses always occupy thematic position, signaling that a response is expected. In contrast, there is no Finite in Chinese. In addition, the wh- element usually occupies the same position in the clause as the element would have in the corresponding declarative clause in the unmarked case. There are only two instances in the data where the wh- elements are in clause-initial position (see Section 3.5.3). In topical Themes the first difference concerns the Theme of existential clauses. In English the Subject *there* is

typically the Theme of the clause whereas in Chinese, first, either a circumstance or the Process occupies thematic position in the unmarked case. Second, topical Themes in Chinese can be ellipsed especially in the environment of Theme-chains. Third, there is a subtle difference between the absolute Theme in Chinese and in English. As mentioned in Section 4.3.4.1, it is possible to have more than one absolute Theme in Chinese, all being assigned thematic prominence. To put it in another way, there can be more than two layers of thematic structure in Chinese.

4.5.4 Relative frequency of various options

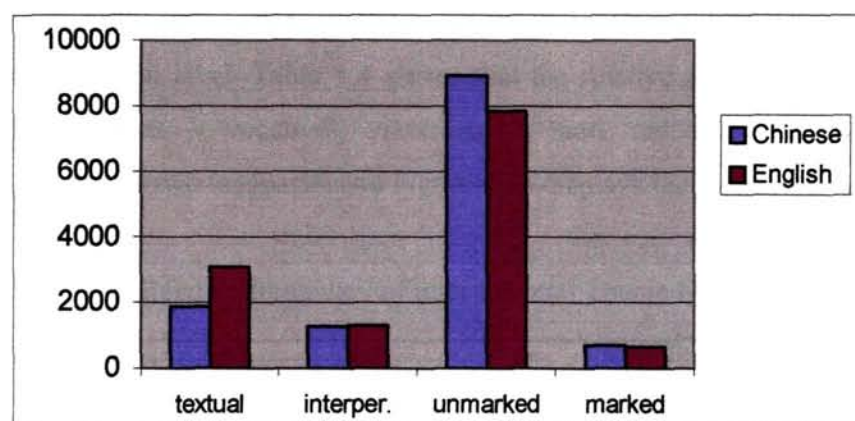
The number of occurrences and relative frequencies of each Theme type in the whole corpus in the two languages are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Relative frequency of THEME types in Chinese and English

Theme types		occurrence			
		Chinese		English	
THEME	textual	yes	1874 18.4%	3091	30.7%
		no	8323 81.6%	6971	69.3%
	interpersonal	yes	1263 12.5%	1300	12.9%
		no	8817 87.7%	8765	87.2%
	topical	unmarked	8930 92.7%	7842	92.4%
		marked	708 7.3%	647	7.6%

At the most general level, the data show that the major difference between the two languages lies in the frequency with which a textual Theme is selected. The relative frequency of a clause with a textual Theme is much lower in Chinese than in English, namely 18.4% v. 30.7% respectively. Figure 4.30 displays the differences between the two languages graphically.

Figure 4.30: Number of occurrences of different Theme types in Chinese and English



At a more delicate level, the data show that the difference in the rate of selection of textual Theme between the two languages is a result of both grammatical difference and difference in systemic probabilities (Table 4.3). First, grammatically, a *wh*- (relative) element does not exist in Chinese relative clauses. Second, though the system of CONJUNCTION in both languages provides resources covering the same semantic range, the number of occurrences of conjunctive Theme in Chinese is lower than in English, and the difference in frequency observed is therefore not a grammatical one but one in systemic probabilities.

Table 4.3: Relative frequency of textual Theme types in Chinese and English

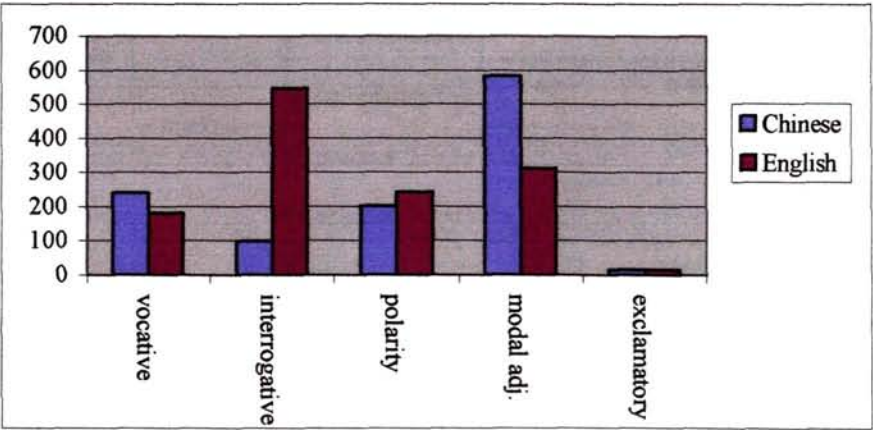
types of textual Theme		occurrence			
		Chinese		English	
textual Theme →	Wh (relative)	---		975	32%
	Continuative	302	17%	305	10%
	Conjunctive	1572	83%	1811	58%
	TOTAL	1874	100%	3091	100%

The frequency of selection of interpersonal Theme shows that some differences at a more delicate level although there is no significant difference between the two languages at the most general level. Table 4.4 shows that the relative frequencies of three interpersonal Theme types – ‘vocative’, ‘interrogative’ and ‘modal adjunct’ – are quite different between the two languages and Figure 4.31 displays the differences graphically.

Table 4.4: Relative frequency of interpersonal Theme types in Chinese and English

types of interpersonal Theme		occurrence			
		Chinese		English	
Interpersonal Theme →	vocative	241	22%	181	14%
	interrogative	98	9%	546	42%
	polarity	201	18%	244	19%
	modal Adjunct	583	50%	313	14%
	exclamatory	15	1%	16	1%
	TOTAL	1263	100%	1300	100%

Figure 4.31: Occurrence of different interpersonal Theme types in Chinese and English



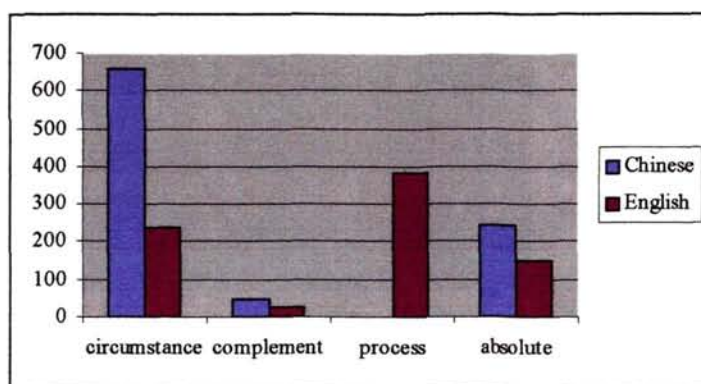
The differences in the frequency of selection of ‘vocative’, ‘polarity’ and ‘modal Adjunct’ between the languages are mainly due to the systemic differences in probabilities because there is no significant difference in terms of any grammatical constraints on these options. In contrast, the difference in the frequency of selection of ‘interrogative’ may be due to the grammatical difference between the two languages, as mentioned in Section 4.5.3. Finally, the difference in the frequency of selection of ‘exclamatory’ between the two languages is extremely small.

Regarding the frequency of selection of topical Theme, there is no significant difference in the choice between ‘unmarked’ and ‘marked’ topical Themes between the two languages. However, differences arise at a more delicate level. Table 4.5 shows that the frequency of selection of different ‘marked’ topical Themes in Chinese is different from English. Figure 4.32 displays these differences graphically.

Table 4.5: Relative frequency of topical Theme types in Chinese and English

types of topical Theme			occurrence			
			Chinese		English	
topical Theme →	unmarked →	non-ellipsed	6391	64.6%	7842	90.8%
		ellipsed	2539	25.7%		
	marked →	circumstantial	661	6.7%	236	2.7%
		complement	45	0.5%	28	0.3%
		process	2	0.0%	383	4.4%
		absolute	244	2.5%	152	1.8%
		TOTAL	9882	100%	8641	100%

Figure 4.32: Occurrence of different topical Theme types in Chinese and English



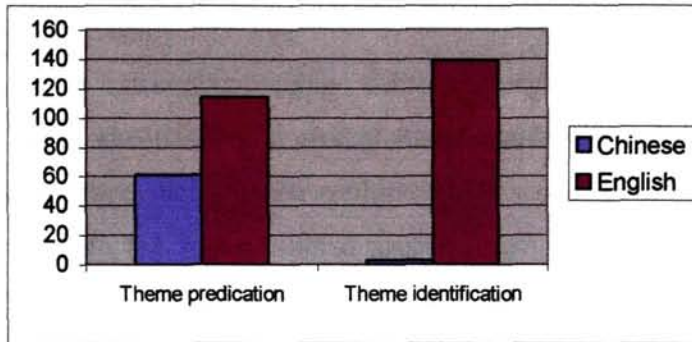
There are far more instances of marked Theme of process in the corpus in English than in Chinese. The difference is mainly due to the difference in grammatical constraint on them, i.e. it is possible for the Process to occupy the thematic position in the projecting clause in English but not in Chinese. In contrast, there are significantly more marked circumstantial Themes in the corpus in Chinese than in English. The difference is a result of systemic differences in probability, relating to the method of text development (see Section 6.7 for further discussion).

Table 4.6 indicates the relative frequencies of Theme predication and Theme identification ('bracket Theme' in Chinese) in the two languages, while Figure 4.33 displays the differences graphically.

Table 4.6: Relative frequency of other Theme types in Chinese and English

	Chinese		English	
predicated Theme	61	95.9%	114	45.1%
identified Theme	3	4.1%	139	54.9%
TOTAL	74	100%	253	100%

Figure 4.33: Occurrence of other Theme types in Chinese and English



The number of occurrences of Theme predication and especially of Theme identification in the corpus is much less in Chinese than in English. Since both types of Theme are available in both languages, their differences are mainly due to systemic differences in probability in the two languages. Theme identification is obviously extremely rare in a Chinese translation of this kind since there are only three occurrences in the corpus out of a total of 10,075 clauses.

4.6 Conclusion

The textual metafunction concerns the creation of text, i.e. the enabling of the ideational and interpersonal meanings as text in context. In the present study the resources which differentiate among the different values and statuses of the components of the unfolding text and which expand the text to create and maintain the semiotic flow have been explored. In this chapter two types of resources have been explored. They include: (1) resources for assigning thematic prominence and information prominence to various information chunks in a message; and (2) resources for marking the textual status of messages in a text. These two types of resources are construed as the semantic systems of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE and TEXTUAL STATUS respectively, which are realised by the grammatical systems of THEME and INFORMATION.

As text unfolds, each chunk of information in a message is assigned a different degree of textual prominence, i.e. high thematic prominence against low thematic prominence, and

high news prominence against low news prominence. This is formulated systemically as the system of TEXTUAL PROMINENCE.

On the other hand, each message is assigned a different degree of textual status, in terms of different kinds of 'markedness'. The present study has identified three types of textual 'markedness', namely thematicity, newsworthiness and scope. On the one hand, all of them are concerned with the "distributional probabilities" to the features in a system, where an 'unmarked' feature stands for a relatively high in probability and a 'marked' one stands for a relatively low in probability. On the other hand, the markedness of thematicity is closely related to the 'point of departure' of the message, which is significant to the method of text development; whereas the markedness of newsworthiness is concerned with the information focus, which is closely related to the interactants' expectations; and finally the markedness of the scope (of the information unit) is concerned with the length of the information unit, whose semantic implications are yet to be explored.

In addition to displaying these three kinds of 'markedness', a message is always related to the previous message in a certain kind of logico-semantic relationship in order to form a coherent text. This relationship can be either stated explicitly by a conjunction or left implicitly in the context. When the relation is explicitly stated, the conjunction used can be assigned a high thematic prominence or a low one. Furthermore, a message always carries the speaker's modal investment in the Subject. The modal investment can also be assigned a high thematic prominence or a low one. All these options are available in the language 'potential' to the language users. They are formulated systemically as the semantic system of TEXTUAL STATUS.

Imposing experiential-like discreteness by drawing constituency boundaries between the peak and the trough in the wave of information, a message can be divided into two distinctive components, namely Theme and Rheme. The Theme of a major clause extends up to the first element that has a transitivity function, whereas the Rheme represents the rest of the clause. Each of the three metafunctional components of the content plane may

contribute thematic material and therefore, there are three simultaneous subsystems, namely the systems of TEXTUAL THEME, INTERPERSONAL THEME and IDEATIONAL THEME. They are formulated systemically into a system network of THEME. On the other hand, the system of INFORMATION consists of at least two simultaneous subsystems, namely INFORMATION FOCUS and SCOPE. Since the present study is concerned with written texts, only the structural devices which realised the 'marked' focus have been examined. The systems of THEME and INFORMATION grammatically realise the semantic system of TEXTUAL STATUS.

Again I have compared the system network of THEME in Chinese and in English from the three angles: 'above', 'around' and 'below', as well as the relative frequency with which the various options in the system network have been chosen in the corpuses.

At this point the study is ready to explore the resources, which ongoingly expands the text so as to create and maintain the semiotic flow. They include: (1) resources for identifying, keeping track and developing of various information across the text; (2) resources for indicating the logico-semantic relations between the messages in a text; and (3) resources for guiding the method of development as the text unfolds. In other words, the study is ready to move from the study of clause grammar to the study of text semantics.