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THEMATIC ELEMENTS

Aleš Svoboda

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the present paper is to inform the general reader about the types of thematic elements and their characteristics as seen in the light of the latest research into the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP). The secondary purpose is to present a sequel to the book (Svoboda 1981b) which introduces the thematic element called diatheme and examines it against the background of other thematic and non-thematic elements in an Old English text (AElfric's homily). To fulfil our primary task, we shall deal with the separate types of thematic elements in a general way and with due regard to their place within the system of FSP. To fulfil our secondary task, we shall provide a general description with Middle English examples and statistical data based on an analysis of the first five chapters of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (Malory 1977.3—9). Since AElfric's text (in Svoboda 1981b) contains 450 and Malory's text 487 clauses and semiclauses, the Old English and Middle English results can be easily compared. The general description offered, however, exceeds the scope of the historical analysis and is valid for the Modern English versions of the analyzed texts and most probably for any kind of narrative prose.

For the less informed reader, we shall first sum up the basic concepts of the theory of FSP. The leading idea is that the separate elements of the sentence (clause) do not contribute to the development of the discourse in the same way. Some are communicatively more important than others: they — as it were — push the communication forward with greater force and may be regarded as communicatively more dynamic. Hence the degree of communicative dynamism (CD) is the relative extent to which the sentence element contributes to the further development of the communication (cf. Firbas 1971, 1979.31). The degree of CD of an element (always relative to the degrees of CD of other elements of the same sentence) is determined by the result of the interplay of three factors, or — as they are frequently called — three means of FSP: context (hierarchically superior to the other two), semantics and linearity.

The sentence (clause) is a communicative (or distributional) field, in

which the semantico-grammatical structure provides conditions for various degrees of CD to be distributed over the sentence elements. Any sentence element (from the zero morpheme to the whole clause) may be regarded as a conveyer of CD. The conveyers of CD appearing at the same hierarchic level are called communicative units. At the level of the clause, the communicative units mostly coincide with the syntactic units (subject, object, adverbial, complement (no matter whether expressed by one morpheme or the whole subordinate clause)) except for the predicative verb, which splits into two communicative units: one is expressed by the notional content of the finite verb and the other by its temporal and modal exponent(s) (see Firbas 1961). Statistically, the communicative unit expressed by the temporal and modal exponent(s) of the finite verb is the most stable of all the units, as it regularly conveys the medial degree of CD in relation to the other units of the same clause (for details see Firbas 1968). This unit is called transition proper and represents a dividing line between units with a lower degree of CD (thematic units) and units with the same or a higher degree of CD (non-thematic units). Instead of speaking about thematic communicative units and non-thematic communicative units, we shall — for the sake of brevity — use the less cumbersome terms thematic and non-thematic elements.

Transition proper (Tr_p) is the least dynamic (conveying the lowest degree of CD) of all the non-thematic elements (cf. Firbas 1965). More dynamic than transition proper is transition (non-proper) (Tr), frequently expressed by the notional part of the verb (cf. Firbas 1961, 1968). Transition proper and transition constitute the transitional sphere of the communicative field (clause). Elements conveying a higher degree of CD than transition are called rhemes (R), and constitute the rhematic sphere of the clause. The most dynamic element within the clause is rheme proper (R_p). (See Firbas esp. 1966, 1979.) In contradistinction to transitions proper and transitions, rhemes and rhemes proper are expressed by the most varied syntactic (and also semantic) units.

2. THEMATIC ELEMENTS

Elements conveying a lower degree of communicative dynamism (CD) than transition proper are called thematic elements and constitute the thematic sphere of the clause (see Firbas 1964, 1966). The least dynamic element of the thematic sphere is theme proper (denoted by T_p); the most dynamic element of the thematic sphere is diatheme (denoted by T_d). Other types of thematic elements display either characteristics similar to theme proper or those standing close to diatheme. A detailed description of thematic elements is the task of the following subsections. At this juncture, however, we should like to insert a few opening remarks which may facilitate the orientation of the reader and may also answer some questions concerning the Middle English text.

According to the degrees of CD, we distinguish the following five types of thematic elements:

	symbol	occurrence	%
1. ellipted themes proper	(T _p)	105	12.2
2. themes proper (non-ellipted)	T _p	206	23.9
3. theme-proper oriented themes	T _(p)	63	7.3
4. diatheme oriented themes	T _(a)	108	12.5
5. diathemes	T _a	379	44.0
		861	99.9

The above list of different types of thematic elements introduces their symbols, the number of times they occur and their occurrence rates in Malory's text. The analyzed text of 487 clauses contains 861 thematic elements, which comes to an average of 1.77 thematic elements per clause. The whole body of Malory's text was subjected to FSP-analysis and was "transcribed" as a contextual flow-diagram, which is a graphical arrangement of elements according to their membership in clauses, their FSP-functions and their contextual ties. (For more detail see Svoboda 1981b.112f.) All the thematic elements were examined from the viewpoint of their

- a) contextual ties,
- b) semantic relations,
- c) syntactic functions,
- d) word categories,
- e) word-order positions.

By a contextual tie sub a), we understand the relation of identity or similarity of reference between a certain element and some other previously occurring element(s) in the text or situation. An element may or may not be contextually tied irrespective of its FSP-function within the clause. In this sense, contextual ties mostly coincide with Halliday and Hasan's cohesive ties as described in (1976), but they do not fully coincide with Firbas' concepts of contextual dependence and contextual independence, which reflect his dynamic approach to ever-changing (dynamic) contextual conditioning at the very moment of communication (for details see Firbas 1979.31 and pp. 18ff. of the present volume of BSE). Firbas' context-dependent elements (e.g. *he* in *On March 24, 1982, he will fly to Prague*) and context-independent elements (e.g. *on March 24, 1982*, in the above sentence) coincide with contextually tied and contextually free elements only in the thematic sphere of the clause, whereas in the non-thematic sphere, all the elements are regarded as context-independent. From our (static) viewpoint, the non-thematic elements may be either contextually free (*a shooting star* in *You will see a shooting star*) or contextually tied (*him* and *her* in *You will see him, not her*). Apart from "contextually tied" and "contextually free", we shall employ the term "partly (contextually) tied". An element is partly tied if at least one of its (notional) components is tied and the other(s) is (are) free. E.g., *his name* functions as one partly tied element, where the component *his* is

tion and the component *name* is free; or in *after two days*, the naming component *two days* is free, the relational component *after* is tied to some other time indication in the preceding text, hence the whole element *after two days* is partly tied. In order not to bring confusion into the terms, we shall — for the purpose of the present paper — dispense with the concepts of contextual dependence and independence and shall employ only terms related to contextual ties.

By semantic relations sub b), we chiefly understand the relations between and among the elements from the viewpoint of the Firbasian semantic scales: the appearance scale (containing Setting(s) — Appearance — Appearing Phenomenon) and the quality scale (containing Quality Bearer — Quality — Specification(s)). (See esp. Firbas 1979:50.) The thematic elements, constituted mainly by Setting(s) and Quality Bearer(s), represent the thematic sphere of the clause. Within the succession of thematic spheres (in successive (= subsequent) clauses), some thematic elements may become “old”, well established (and may stand — as it were — in the background of the thematic sphere), while others may appear as “new”, unestablished (and may stand — as it were — in the foreground of the thematic sphere). This aspect will also be taken into account when the separate types of thematic elements are examined.

What we understand by syntactic functions sub c), word categories sub d), and word-order positions sub e) will become clear in the course of the discussion. Some statistical figures concerning the items sub c), d), e), have been drawn from Svobodová 1981.

Before dealing with the separate types of thematic elements, we should like to stress the fact that, in the present paper, the statistical results are not meant to represent the starting point of the discussion (as was the case with AElfric’s text in Svoboda 1981b), but rather to corroborate the general conclusions and to present data for comparison.

2.1 Ellipted themes proper

The ellipted theme proper is a special case of theme proper. As a type, it is the least dynamic element within the clause. It is contextually tied to such an extent (the contextual tie is so self-evident) that it is only signalled by the semantico-syntactic structure of the respective clause, and is not expressed explicitly by a separate word. The example in Fig. 1 will illustrate both the ellipted and the non-ellipted themes proper, appearing alternately in successive clauses. (For convenience sake, we use the Modern English spelling as presented in Malory 1979. The figures in brackets denote the page and line in the same edition.)

In written texts the ellipted theme proper is always part of a hypertheme. Hypertheme is an element which remains within the thematic sphere of two or more clauses without its extralingual reference (semantic content) being changed. In other words, hypertheme consists of two or more thematic elements that are tied together contextually. These elements create contextual strings which are called hyperthematic strings. (For such a string see Fig. 1.) The members of one hyperthematic string may

perform different thematic functions within their respective clauses and may be expressed by different formal means. Being always contextually tied, ellipted themes proper are always members of a hyperthematic string. Each member of a hyperthematic string has either a thematic or a rhematic or no predecessor, as well as a thematic or a rhematic or no successor. (E.g., the ellipted theme proper in the second clause in Fig. 1 has a thematic predecessor *she*, functioning as T_p in the first clause, and a thematic successor *she*, functioning as T_p in the third clause.)

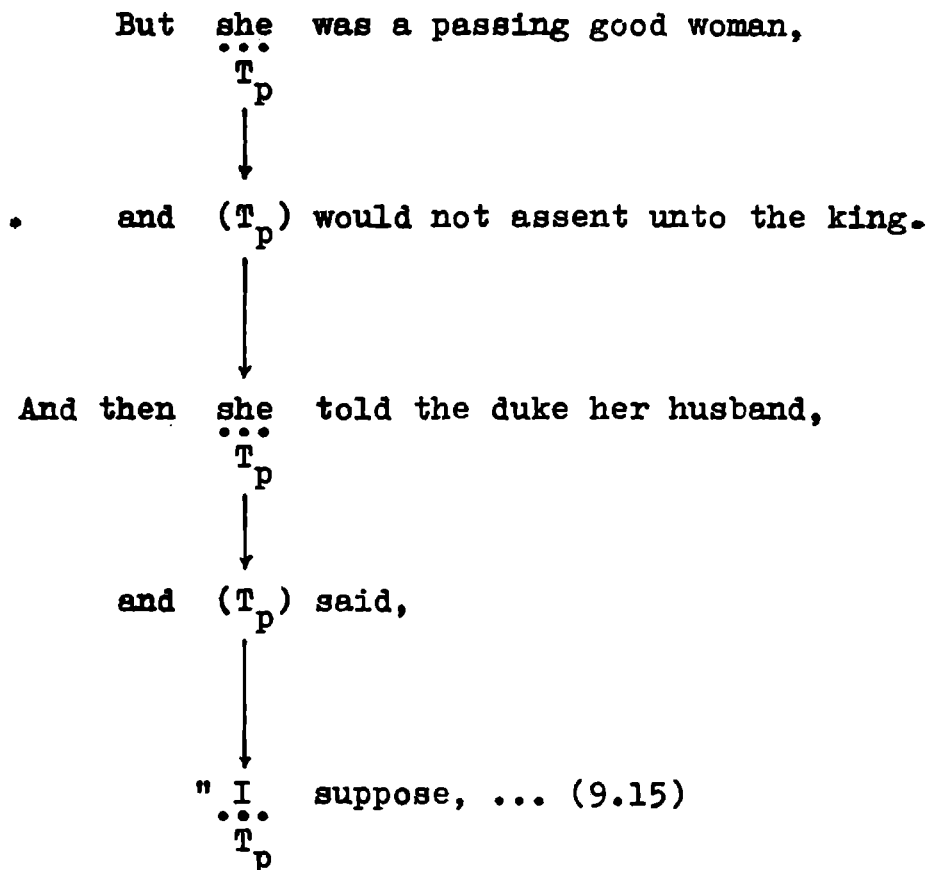


Fig. 1

Taken as a type, ellipted themes proper are the most self-centred elements within the thematic sphere because — in the majority of cases — they are both preceded and followed by elements of their own or closely related type (i.e. ellipted themes proper, themes proper and theme-proper oriented themes). Hence they contribute to the preservation of the thematic spheres in successive clauses in a most substantial way. Quite often they

are preceded by diathemes, and less often followed by them, which also speaks in favour of the tendency to preserve the respective elements within the succession of thematic spheres. Rhematic predecessors and rhematic successors are very rare.

The tabular arrangement below shows the occurrences and the occurrence rates (in Malory's text) of various thematic and non-thematic elements appearing as predecessors to ellipted themes proper and as successors. It is to be kept in mind that (T_r)-predecessors and (T_n)-successors represent two separate counts.

elements	as (T_p)-predecessors		as (T_p)-successors	
zero (no 'cessor)	—	—	15	14.3 %
ellipted theme proper	14	13.3 %	14	13.3 %
theme proper	35	33.3 %	38	36.2 %
theme-proper oriented theme	12	11.4 %	11	10.5 %
diatheme oriented theme	—	—	2	1.9 %
diatheme	33	31.4 %	17	16.2 %
transition	—	—	—	—
rheme	4	3.8 %	2	1.9 %
rheme proper	7	6.7 %	6	5.7 %
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	105	99.9 %	105	100.0 %

Semantically, the ellipted theme proper functions as Quality Bearer or Setting. Being always contextually tied, it represents a well-established item within the succession of thematic spheres and its notional content stands close to that of a personal pronoun (or pronominal adverb). In contradistinction to thematic elements expressed by personal pronouns, ellipted themes proper can only refer to one particular item (given by the structure of the "preceding" clause (see Fig. 1) or the same clause (imperatives with the ellipted you)) but cannot differentiate between two or more (he, she, it, etc.).

As for its syntactic function, the ellipted theme proper displays a very strong tendency to express the subject of the clause (or semiclause). In Malory the distribution of syntactic functions within ellipted themes proper is as follows:

(T_p) functioning as	subject	100	95.2 %
	object	2	1.9 %
	adverbial	1	1.0 %
	other	2	1.9 %
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		105	100.0 %

With ellipted themes proper we cannot speak about any definite word category or any definite word-order position. This sets them clearly apart from non-ellipted themes proper, which will be dealt with in the following subsection.

2.2 Themes proper

The (non-ellipted) theme proper is the least dynamic element explicitly expressed within a given clause. (See Fig. 1.) Very often it is contextually tied, but this is not a rule. It has a strong tendency to be a member of a hyperthematic string. Like the ellipted theme proper, it is frequently preceded as well as followed by elements of its own type. But unlike the ellipted theme proper, it may stand alone (without any apparent predecessor or successor) or represent the first member of a hyperthematic string. Themes proper without (apparent) predecessors usually express what we call eternal themes. Eternal themes are elements that frequently appear as thematic in any kind of text. They refer to the speaker, the listener, "man" in general and "nature" in general. Even when these elements are not mentioned in the "preceding" text, they are always the matter-of-course items of, not the verbal, but the situational context. (This is not to say that they — and especially the first two — cannot play the role of diathemes or even rhemes proper. Such functions, however, must always be clearly signalled by word order, semantics and the immediate verbal context of the clause in question. Without special signals, i.e. in their unmarked use, these elements remain thematic.)

Within the hyperthematic strings, themes proper display the above mentioned tendency towards self-preservation, but they also contribute to the phenomenon called the oscillation of the thematic spheres of successive clauses. By this oscillation we understand the successive changes of more dynamic thematic elements (e.g. diathemes) into less dynamic thematic elements (e.g. themes proper) and vice versa. The former changes are called dedynamizations, the latter (thematic) intensifications. As themes proper are often both preceded and followed by diathemes, they are therefore involved in both dedynamizations and intensifications. Within the succession of thematic spheres, some thematic elements "move" from the foreground to the background or from the background to the foreground according to the communicative purpose of the speaker. If the element is to be foregrounded, it becomes diatheme; if it is backgrounded, it usually functions as theme proper.

The figures below (based on Malory's text) will make the contextual surroundings of themes proper clearer. (Once again we remind the reader of the fact that the two counts, predecessors and successors, are quite independent.)

elements	as T _p -predecessors		as T _p -successors	
zero (no 'cessor)	21	10.2 %	34	16.5 %
ellipted theme proper	38	18.4 %	35	17.0 %
theme proper	59	28.6 %	60	29.1 %

theme-proper oriented theme	10	4.9 %	12	5.8 %
diatheme oriented theme	2	1.0 %	2	1.0 %
diatheme	61	29.6 %	53	25.7 %
transition	—	—	—	—
rheme	2	1.0 %	2	1.0 %
rheme proper	13	6.3 %	8	3.9 %
	206	100.0 %	206	100.0 %

There are 21 themes proper with zero (no) predecessors, expressed by the following elements:

<i>here</i>	9 occ.
<i>it (general)</i>	9 occ.
<i>they (general)</i>	1 occ.
<i>him (general)</i>	1 occ.
<i>we</i>	1 occ.

Leaving aside the formal *there*, the other elements can be qualified as eternal themes (see above). The proportion of zero successors shows the degree to which themes proper “leave the discourse” (either for good or in order to be re-introduced into it later on).

Semantically, themes proper function as Quality Bearers or Settings. They are either contextually tied or represent matter-of-course items of the communicative situation. They are well established within the succession of thematic spheres and, therefore, may be regarded as standing in the background. In contradistinction to ellipted themes proper, they have the power to differentiate between two or more well-established items in the preceding text.

As to the syntactic functions, themes proper most often play the role of subject. The object, however, represents a higher proportion than in the case of ellipted themes.

T _p functioning as	subject	161	78.2 %
	object	30	14.6 %
	adverbial	14	6.8 %
	other	1	0.5 %
		206	100.0 %

The word categories only reflect the strong tendency of themes proper to be contextually tied and to be placed in the background of the thematic sphere.

T_p expressed by	pronoun	178	86.4 %
	noun group	17	8.3 %
	adverb	11	5.3 %
		<hr/> 206	<hr/> 100.0 %

The relative frequencies of the word-order positions occupied by themes proper are illustrated by the graph in Fig. 2 (n denotes the last position, $n-1$ the last but one position; zero position is in this case occupied by the relative pronoun in the relative clause).

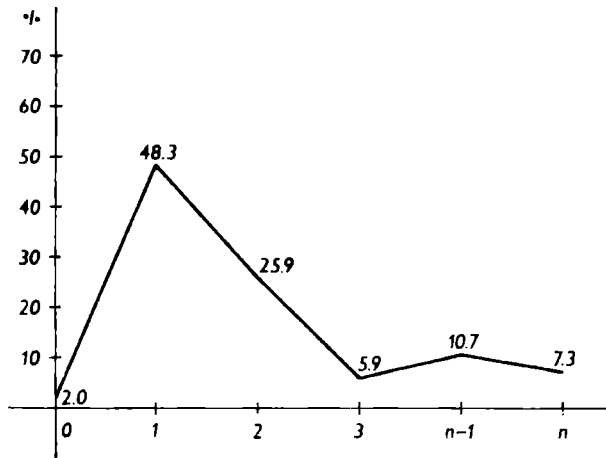


Fig. 2

The word-order positions of themes proper will be discussed in connection with theme-proper oriented themes, which are dealt with in the following subsection.

2.3 Theme-proper oriented themes

If two elements perform different syntactic and semantic functions in one clause, they also differ in the degrees of CD they convey even when the contextual ties are, or seem to be, the same. If there are two elements of theme proper nature in one clause, only one of them can be the least dynamic of all the elements (both thematic and non-thematic) and perform the function of theme proper. The other is more dynamic than theme proper and functions as theme-proper oriented theme.

Roughly speaking, the theme-proper oriented theme is an element that displays certain features of theme proper but cannot become one because of the presence of a less dynamic element performing the function of theme proper within the same clause. Fig. 3 will illustrate. (The symbols

are the following: (T_p) — ellipted theme proper, T_p — theme proper, $T_{(p)}$ — theme-proper oriented theme.)

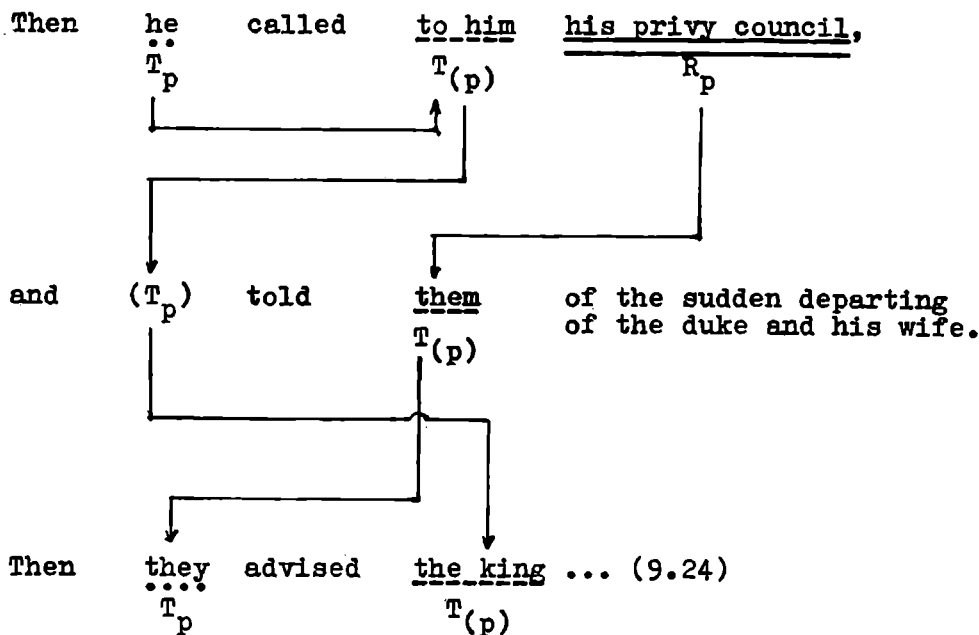


Fig. 3

At first glance the theme-proper oriented theme seems to have the same contextual characteristics as theme proper; it tends to display strong contextual ties and is a frequent member of a hyperthematic string. The statistical analysis, however, shows that theme-proper oriented themes also reveal contextual features different from those obtained for themes proper. The proportion of rhematic predecessors is much higher than in the case of themes proper, which testifies to the fact that theme-proper oriented themes are — as a type — less established within the succession of thematic spheres, because they more often represent the immediate continuation of elements that appeared in the given section of text for the first time. As will be shown later on, this is one of the contextual features typical of diathemes. Another feature that reminds us of diathemes is the contextual ability of theme-proper oriented theme to perform the compilatory function, i.e. to relate back, not to one single element but to the whole content of a clause or clauses. In comparison with themes proper, theme-proper oriented themes display a higher proportion of diathematic successors, which corroborates the idea that they are less self-centred and less established within the thematic spheres of successive clauses. They also avoid being the last member of a hyperthematic string.

The statistical data taken from Malory's text will confirm what has been said above.

elements	as T _(p) -predecessors		as T _(p) -successors	
zero	1	1.6 %	5	7.9 %
ellipted theme proper	11	17.5 %	11	17.5 %
theme proper	12	19.0 %	11	17.5 %
theme-proper oriented theme	6	9.5 %	7	11.1 %
diatheme oriented theme	1	1.6 %	—	—
diatheme	17	27.0 %	25	39.7 %
transition	—	—	—	—
rheme	1	1.6 %	1	1.6 %
rheme proper	13	20.6 %	3	4.8 %
clause(s)	1	1.6 %	—	—
	63	100.0 %	63	100.0 %

As to the syntactic functions, theme-proper oriented themes most often play the role of object. This is another feature in which they differ from themes proper.

T _(p) functioning as	subject	1	1.6 %
	object	56	88.9 %
	adverbial	6	9.5 %
		63	100.0 %

The word categories reflected the tendency of theme-proper oriented themes to be contextually tied and to convey a relatively low degree of CD.

T _(p) expressed by	pronoun	58	92.1 %
	noun group	3	4.8 %
	adverb	2	3.2 %
		63	100.1 %

While themes proper display a strong tendency to occupy the first and the second word-order positions in the clause, theme-proper oriented themes are most often found in the last but one and the last positions. Or, to put it another way, the former tend to appear at or near the beginning, and the latter just before or at the end of the clause. This is another feature that makes the two elements distinct as a type. The graph in Fig. 4 shows the word-order positions of theme-proper oriented themes in Malory's text.

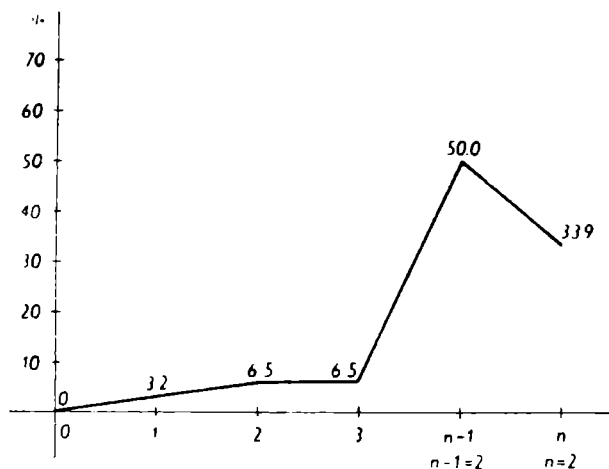


Fig. 4

On the grounds of what we have learned about themes proper and theme-proper oriented themes, we can say that their common feature is a strong tendency to be contextually tied, which is reflected by the fact that both types of elements are mostly expressed by personal pronouns. Their contextual surroundings, however, are partly different, which explains why theme-proper oriented themes are less established within the thematic spheres and are less active in stabilizing these spheres in successive clauses. The two types of elements differ in the syntactic functions they perform and the word-order positions they occupy. A closer look will reveal that themes proper and theme-proper oriented themes are — in these two respects — complementary.

2.4 Diatheme oriented themes

Before dealing with diatheme oriented themes, we should say a few words about diathemes and their principal functions. The diatheme is the most dynamic element of the thematic sphere of the clause. From the viewpoint of the succession of thematic spheres, diathemes perform three principal functions:

- (i) they link the (preceding) non-thematic spheres and the (following) thematic spheres by constituting ties between non-thematic and thematic elements;
- (ii) they link the successive thematic spheres together by keeping a certain element in the foreground or foregrounding some of the background elements;
- (iii) they introduce new information into the thematic sphere of the clause; in other words, they introduce new elements in such a way that they have to be regarded as thematic and are distinct from other new elements that are to function as non-thematic (transitional or rhematic).

Diathemes frequently perform all these functions, but may differ in laying more emphasis on one function and less on the other two. Now let us turn to diatheme oriented themes.

The diatheme oriented theme is an element that displays certain features of diatheme but cannot become one because of the presence of a more dynamic thematic element performing the function of diatheme. (See Fig. 5. T_d denotes diatheme, $T(d)$ diatheme oriented theme.)

Then within two years King Uther fell sick of a great malady.

$T(d)$ T_d (14.15)

Fig. 5

If we take into account the preceding context, both diathematic elements in Fig. 5 are partly contextually tied. *King Uther* was a well-established thematic element before, but since it has not appeared in the immediately preceding context, it is re-introduced as a thematic element anew. (The use of the full name is necessary, because the personal pronoun *he* would refer to quite another element.) The adverbial *then within two years* brings new information on the one hand, but contextually relates to the contents of the preceding clauses on the other.

If the degrees of CD cannot be decided by context, they are usually determined by semantics. In our case, we make use of the (fused) Firbasian semantic scale (cf. Firbas 1979.50), which orders the elements with the most abstract semantic functions according to the rising degrees of CD (providing the contextual conditions of the compared elements are the same):

Setting — Quality Bearer — Quality — Specification(s)

In our example (Fig. 5), *King Uther* is the quality bearer, *fell sick* the quality, and *of a great malady* the specification. Adverbials expressing temporal, spatial and other circumstantial indications may function either as settings or as specifications. In our case, the adverbial functions as a temporal setting (the specification would require special contextual and word-order signals) and therefore conveys a lower degree of CD than the quality bearer *King Uther*. (Under different contextual conditions, the quality bearer may become theme proper and the adverbial may play the role of diatheme.)

Of the three principal functions of diathemes, diatheme oriented themes most often perform functions (iii) and (i). They tend to bring new information into the thematic sphere of the clause by introducing new temporal, spatial and other circumstantial elements, or they link the contents of the whole preceding clause or clauses and the thematic sphere of the clause in which they occur. This means that from the viewpoint of context, they mostly appear to be either without ties, or partly tied with more

than one element in the preceding text. The statistical data based on Malory's text will corroborate these statements:

elements	as $T_{(d)}$ -predecessors		as $T_{(d)}$ -successors	
zero	64	59.3 %	96	88.9 %
ellipted theme proper	2	1.9 %	—	—
theme proper	2	1.9 %	2	1.9 %
theme-proper oriented theme	—	—	1	0.9 %
diatheme oriented theme	2	1.9 %	2	1.9 %
diatheme	5	4.6 %	6	5.6 %
transition	—	—	—	—
rheme	—	—	—	—
rheme proper	3	2.8 %	1	0.9 %
clause(s)	30	27.9 %	—	—
	108	100.2 %	108	100.0 %

The high proportions of zero predecessors and zero successors testify to the fact that diatheme oriented themes very often stand alone and bring new information into the thematic sphere of the clause. The high proportion of clausal predecessors shows to what degree diatheme oriented themes perform what has been called the compilatory function within the contextual ties. As will become clearer later on, the compilatory function is more pronounced with diatheme oriented themes than with diathemes themselves.

Semantically, diatheme oriented themes mostly function as Settings, rarely as Quality Bearers. Being only partly tied or free, they tend to stand in the foreground of the thematic sphere. They, however, cannot stand fully in the foreground, because of some other element which holds this post in the same thematic sphere.

The above contextual and semantic features of diatheme oriented themes are closely connected with the fact that the prevailing syntactic function is that of an adverbial, and among adverbials, that of a conjunct. The data from Malory will illustrate this.

$T_{(d)}$ functioning as	subject	9	8.3 %
	object	2	1.9 %
	adverbial	97	89.8 %
		108	100.0 %

The internal distribution of adverbials is as follows:

conjunct	56	57.7 %
time	22	22.7 %
place	6	6.2 %
manner + other	13	13.4 %
	97	100.0 %

In this connection it is not surprising to find that the most frequent representatives of diatheme oriented themes are adverbs and the most frequent word-order position is position 1 (cf. Fig. 6).

$T_{(d)}$ expressed by	noun group	29	26.9 %
	pronoun	1	0.9 %
	adverb	70	64.8 %
	clause	8	7.4 %
		108	100.0 %

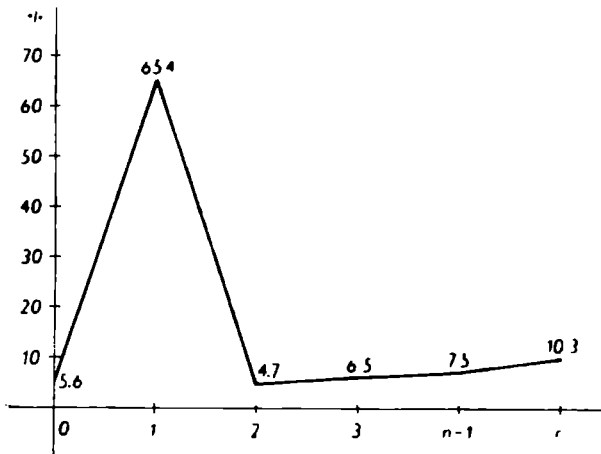


Fig. 6

As will be seen in the following subsection, diatheme oriented themes stand very close to what we shall call adverbial diathemes, but the tendency to perform the compilatory contextual function and to play the syntactic role of conjuncts is more distinct here than anywhere else.

2.5 Diatheme

The diatheme is the most dynamic thematic element within a given clause. Just as rheme proper is the key element in the research into the

appearance of new information within the text, so diatheme is the key element in the investigation of the flow of the information throughout the text and the appearance of what might be called the new information of secondary importance.

The three principal functions of diathemes are adduced at the beginning of subsection 2.4. In line with them, diathemes

- (i) mediate the flow of information from the (preceding) rhematic to the (following) thematic spheres of successive clauses;
- (ii) enable some thematic elements to be or to become the centre of attention while the other elements remain in the background;
- (iii) bring new information into the thematic sphere of the clause, which may be conceived of as conveying new information of secondary importance (in relation to information conveyed by rhematic elements).

Diatheme is the most frequent of all the types of thematic elements. In order to facilitate the examination of many different aspects of diatheme, it is convenient to distinguish between diathemes performing the syntactic function of an adverbial (adverbial diathemes or A-diathemes) and those performing one of the other syntactic functions (for simplicity's sake, subject-object diathemes or SO-diathemes). As adverbial diathemes share many features with diatheme oriented themes, which were treated in the previous subsection, we shall deal with them first.

2.5.1 Adverbial diathemes

The adverbial diatheme is the most dynamic thematic element which at the same time performs the syntactic function of an adverbial. The example in Fig. 7 will illustrate.

... , for within forty days he would fetch him
 $\begin{matrix} T_d & & T_p & & T(p) \end{matrix}$

out of the biggest castle that he hath. (10.4)

Fig. 7

The above example is very similar to the one illustrating the diatheme oriented theme in subsection 2.4 (cf. Fig. 5). The only difference is that the quality bearer *he* in Fig. 7 (also referring to *King Uther*) is fully contextually tied, and therefore the adverbial *within forty days*, which is only partly tied (relating to the day of warning when the count starts), is the most dynamic thematic element and functions as diatheme.

If a quality bearer is already a well-established thematic element, adverbial diathemes provide the appropriate setting for the appearance of its new qualities and specifications and often stand in mild contrast as concerns the time, place or way of appearance. Such diathemes are

frequently expressed by adverbial clauses, which function as one thematic element within the superior clause, but have, of course, their own distribution of thematic and non-thematic elements. The examples in Fig. 8 will illustrate.

"... And when the child is born let it be delivered to me ..."

T_d

So like as Merlin devised it was done.

T_d

And when Sir Ector was come he made fiance to the king ...

T_d

(13.34)

Fig. 8

All the above adverbial diathemes bring new information into their respective thematic spheres and primarily perform function (iii) (see the opposite page). The second adverbial diatheme also refers to the whole content of the preceding clause (the first clause in Fig. 8) and performs a compilatory function, which — in fact — combines functions (ii) and (i). A clearer example of a compilatory adverbial diatheme can be seen in Fig. 9.

..., the duke himself was slain

or-ever the king came at the castle of Tintagel.

So after the death of the duke, King Uther lay ...

T_d

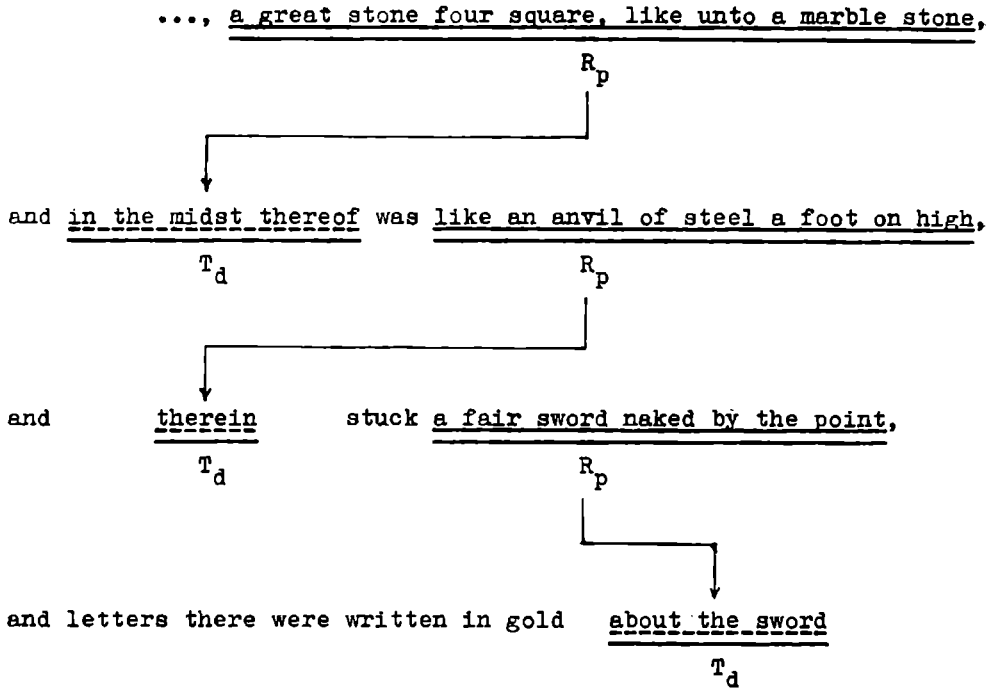
T_p

(12.3)

Fig. 9

If a new phenomenon is to appear in the discourse (cf. Firbas 1975, 1979.50), adverbial diathemes provide its appearance with an appropriate setting. Very often such adverbial diathemes perform only function (iii). As will be shown by the examples in Fig. 10, they may also assist in

performing function (i), which is mainly the domain of subject-object diathemes and consists in linking the (preceding) rhematic spheres and the (following) thematic spheres of successive clauses.



that saiden thus: ... (16.2)

Fig. 10

Function (ii) (to bring or to keep a given element in the foreground of the thematic sphere) is predominantly performed by subject-object diathemes. Adverbial diathemes usually perform this function only to a limited extent by being partly contextually tied. Exceptionally, however, they perform this function in full as can be seen in Fig. 11.

Since adverbial diathemes primarily perform function (iii), they most often appear without predecessors and without successors (cf. the data from Malory on the opposite page).

The syntactic function of the adverbial diatheme is, of course, that of an adverbial. Its internal distribution clearly speaks in favour of adverbials of time.

The same night that my lord was dead,..., there came into my castle
 of Tintagel a man like my lord in speech and
 in countenance, and two knights with him in
 likeness of his two knights Brastias and
 Jordans, and so I went unto bed with him as
 I ought to do with my lord,
and the same night,..., this child was begotten upon me. (13.10)

T_d

↓

T_d

Fig. 11

elements	as A-T _d -predecessors		as A-T _d -successors	
zero	84	77.1 %	100	91.7 %
clipted theme proper	—	—	—	—
theme proper	—	—	4	3.7 %
theme-proper oriented theme	—	—	—	—
diatheme oriented theme	1	0.9 %	1	0.9 %
diatheme	4	3.7 %	4	3.7 %
transition	—	—	—	—
rheme	—	—	—	—
rheme proper	5	4.6 %	—	—
clause(s)	15	13.8 %	—	—
	109	100.1 %	109	100.0 %
A-T _d functioning as	time adverbial	42	38.5 %	
	place adverbial	13	11.9 %	
	manner and other	25	22.9 %	
	conjunct	29	26.6 %	
		109	99.9 %	

The most frequent word category is the adverb, but the proportion of adverbial clauses is also worth mentioning.

A-T _d expressed by	adverb	51	46.8 %
	noun group	34	31.2 %
	clause	24	22.0 %
		109	100.0 %

Adverbial diathemes tend to appear in word-order positions 1 and 0 as can be seen from Fig. 12. (Position 0 is occupied by preceding subordinate clauses and by projected elements whose representatives appear again within the internal structure of the clause.)

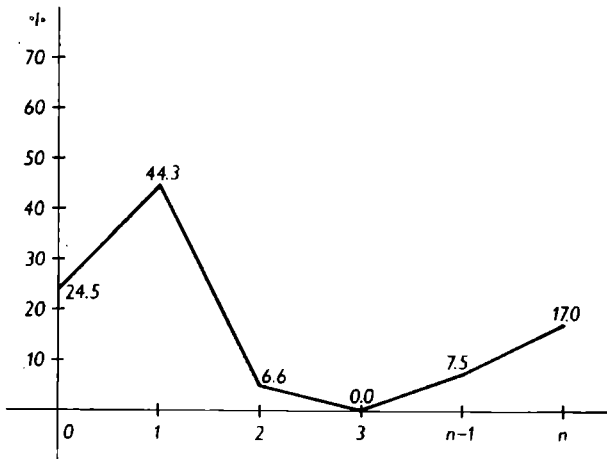


Fig. 12

Adverbial diathemes and diatheme oriented themes (cf. section 2.4) display a high degree of similarity. Their occurrence rate within the text is approximately the same. As diatheme oriented themes mostly perform the syntactic function of adverbials, we can say that half the adverbials aspiring to the role of diatheme are actually employed as such (adverbial diathemes), and half of them are prevented from functioning as diathemes by slightly more dynamic subject-object elements aspiring to the same role.

Apart from many common features that diatheme oriented themes share with adverbial diathemes, there are some differences which cannot be neglected.

Adverbial diathemes are less frequent in performing the compilatory function and more frequent in bringing new information into the thematic sphere of the clause. This shift in emphasis is reflected: from the viewpoint of context, by higher proportion of zero predecessors at the expense of clausal predecessors; from the viewpoint of syntactic functions, by a higher proportion of time, place and manner adverbials at the expense of conjuncts; from the viewpoint of word category, by a higher proportion

of clauses and noun groups at the expense of adverbs; and from the view-point of word order, by a higher proportion of position 0 at the expense of position 1.

2.5.2 Subject-object diathemes

The subject-object diatheme is the most dynamic thematic element which at the same time performs a syntactic function different from that of an adverbial (see Fig. 5 in 2.3). In contradistinction to adverbial dia-

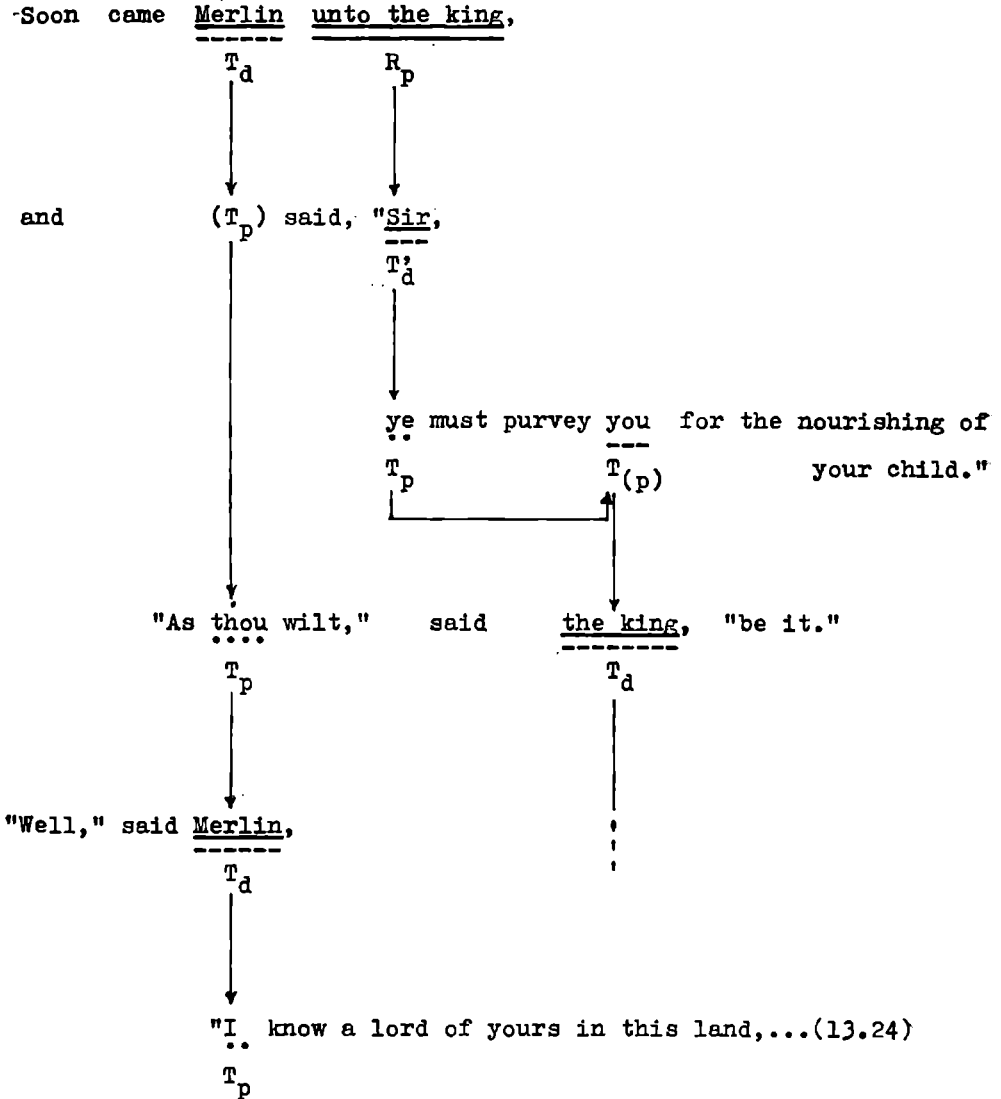


Fig. 13

themes, subject-object diathemes are often members of hyperthematic strings because they frequently link the thematic spheres of successive clauses by putting certain elements into the foreground and thereby letting the other thematic elements stand in the background. By performing this function (called function (ii) in 2.4 and 2.5), subject-object diathemes substantially contribute to the oscillation of thematic elements or — in other words — to the movement of thematic elements into and out of the focus of attention.

Fig. 13 exemplifies two hyperthematic strings; one refers to *Merlin*, the other to *the king*. Both of them contain different types of thematic elements inclusive of diathemes and may illustrate their function (ii). (The text runs normally from left to right; the spatial arrangement is to stress the contextual relations. Only relevant elements are marked. The distribution of other FSP-functions should become clear when we point out that all the predicative verbs function as transitions proper + transitions except the second direct speech, where both *wilt* and *be* function as transition proper + rheme proper. All the direct speeches are rhemes proper in relation to *said*, but have, of course, their own internal distribution of thematic and non-thematic elements. The first clause of the second direct speech represents an adverbial diatheme in relation to *be it*.)

Subject-object diathemes are often found in a kind of mild contrast, which is an accompanying phenomenon of the foregrounding of different thematic elements in neighbouring clauses. In Fig. 13, the diathemes in *said the king* and *said Merlin* represent a textbook case of mild contrast. Mild contrast enables even the semantically “weak” and contextually tied personal pronouns to function as diathemes and to be recognized as such. (This kind of contrast is not to be confused with the heavy *ad-hoc* contrast, which makes the whole clause function in what is called the second instance, with one contrasted element as rheme proper and all the other elements as more or less indiscriminate themes. Cf. Firbas 1979.45.) In Fig. 14, the element *he* in the third clause can be interpreted as diatheme, because it is considered to be in mild contrast with *you (the king) or other men* in the sense of (*not you, not some other men, but*) *he shall have the nourishing of your child*. (The text in Fig. 14 is the continuation of the text in Fig. 13.)

Fig. 14 also exemplifies what has been called function (i): a new element in the discourse usually appears in the rhematic sphere of the clause and then, if used again, it has a strong tendency to function as diatheme, which opens the way for it to become more established within the (following) thematic spheres and to function as theme proper. In our case rheme proper in the first clause is followed by diathemes in the second and the third clause, and by theme proper in the fifth. (Of course, the relative clause is part of rheme proper of the first clause. Why relative pronouns usually play the role of diathemes is a broad question, which exceeds the scope of the present paper. It is dealt with in detail in Svoboda 1981b.50.)

As has been shown in section 2.5.1, function (iii), i.e. the introduction of new information into the thematic sphere, is the main domain of adverbial diathemes, but subject-object diathemes also participate. A typical subject-object diatheme performing function (iii) is the element *his name*

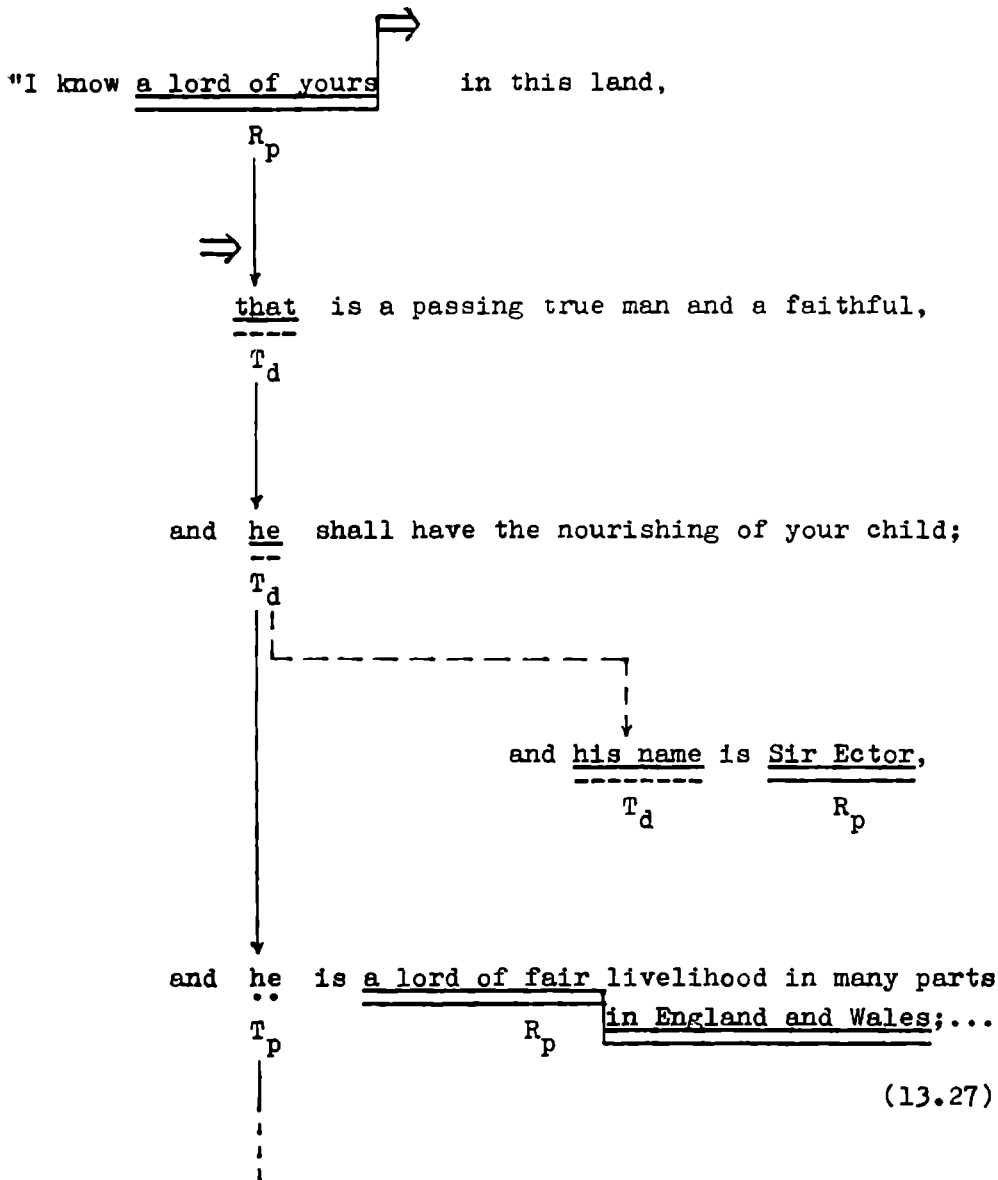


Fig. 14

in the fourth clause (Fig. 14). On the one hand, it is new (*name* has not been mentioned before); on the other, it is related to *he* in the preceding clause, which renders it partly contextually tied.

All three functions can be detected in Fig. 15 (which is the continuation of Fig. 14): function (i) at the beginning of the passage, function (ii) in the middle, and function (iii) in the last two clauses.

The element *this lord, Sir Ector* in the "second" line of Fig. 15 deserves special comment. It is a typical example of a projected element (an element which has another representative with the "same" syntactic function within the clause) functioning as diatheme. Such projected elements often loosen their bonds with the clause in question and become what we have called loose diathemes. (For more detail see Svoboda 1981b.68.) In Malory's text, thirteen elements were qualified as loose subject-object diathemes, all of them representing the vocative address (*Sir, husband*) and occupying the zero word-order position. One such element (denoted by 'T_d') can be found in the second line of Fig. 13. In spite of the fact that it is syntactically loose, semantically and contextually it is an organic part of the hyperthematic string.

The features of subject-object diathemes can also be demonstrated by statistical data based on Malory's text. The number of occurrences and the occurrence rates of predecessors and successors to subject-object diathemes are as follows:

elements	as SO-T _d -predecessors		as SO-T _d -successors	
zero	51	18.9 %	77	28.5 %
ellipted theme proper	17	6.3 %	33	12.2 %
theme proper	53	19.6 %	58	21.5 %
theme-proper oriented theme	24	8.9 %	17	6.3 %
diatheme oriented theme	4	1.5 %	4	1.5 %
diatheme	59	21.9 %	60	22.2 %
transition	—	—	—	—
rheme	2	0.7 %	—	—
rheme proper	47	17.4 %	21	7.8 %
clause(s)	13	4.8 %	—	—
	270	100.0 %	270	100.0 %

The extent of function (i) is demonstrated by the proportion of rhematic and clausal predecessors. A clear majority of thematic predecessors and successors testifies to the dominance of function (ii). The occurrence of zero predecessors may seem to signalize function (iii), but a closer look at the 51 cases reveals that these elements perform function (iii) to only a limited extent and in their own way. A total of 26 of them are what we call long-lived themes. In contradistinction to eternal themes, which may be qualified as potential hyperthemes related to any kind of text (cf.

section 2.2), long-lived themes are potential hyperthemes related to the given text. With the development of the discourse some elements develop a tendency to become thematic. They are often introduced as rhematic elements first, and then — after creating one or more hyperthematic strings — they start appearing as thematic elements without predecessors in the immediately preceding clauses. Due to the situational context and the context of general experience, some elements appear to be semantically related to other elements already introduced into the discourse before or presupposed as common notions. Then they need not be always introduced as rhematic but may immediately play the role of themes, most often diathemes. They are presented as *quasi* context-tied, i.e. they appear in a way showing that they are regarded as matter-of-course items relating to the given text. In our text, such elements are represented by the main characters (*the queen, fair Igraine, Sir Ector*, etc.), people at the court (*Sir Ulfius, Sir Brastias, all knights, the lords*, etc.) and common religious notions (*God, the high mass*, etc.). The remaining 25 diathemes without predecessors are more or less evenly represented by partly contextually tied noun groups of the type *his wife*, demonstrative or personal pronouns in their general or compilatory meaning (*he, this*), interrogative pronouns (*she knew who was the father of her child*), and whole relative clauses with their antecedents (*Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king . . .*).

Semantically, subject-object diathemes function as Quality Bearers that stand in the foreground of the thematic sphere by bringing a new aspect of it. (The new aspect of the thematic sphere is the common denomination of the above three functions that diathemes perform.) Since Quality Bearers are higher in the Firbasian semantic scale than Settings, subject-object elements easily become diathemes, while adverbial elements — within the same clause and under the same contextual conditions — are relegated to the function of diatheme oriented themes.

As to the syntactic functions, the overwhelming majority of subject-object diathemes express the subject of the clause. In our analysis of Malory's text, the projected vocatives were given a separate count.

SO-T _d functioning as	subject	200	74.1 %
	object	44	16.3 %
	complement	5	1.9 %
	proj. vocative	13	4.8 %
	other	8	3.0 %
		270	100.1 %

It is not surprising to find that the most frequent word category of subject-object diathemes is the noun group. The relatively high occurrence of pronouns is due, not to personal, but to demonstrative, relative, interrogative and emphatic pronouns currently functioning as diathemes.

SO-T _d expressed by	noun group	187	69.3 %
	pronoun	74	27.4 %
	clause	7	2.6 %
	adjective	2	0.7 %
		<hr/>	
		270	100.0 %

Like adverbial diathemes, subject-object diathemes most often occupy position 1. What they lose in zero position, they gain in positions 2 and n , as can be seen from Fig. 16 below.

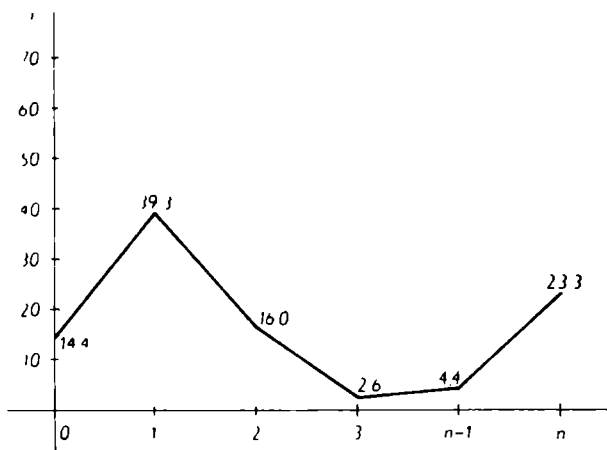


Fig. 16

So much space has been devoted to subject-object diathemes because they are the most frequent, and in terms of their contextual functions probably the most varied, of all the thematic elements.

2.5.3 Diathemes in general

As has been shown above, diathemes basically perform the following three functions:

- (i) they link the thematic sphere of the clause and the rhematic sphere(s) of the preceding clause(s),
- (ii) they link the thematic sphere of the clause and the thematic sphere(s) of the preceding clause(s),
- (iii) they bring new information into the thematic sphere of the clause.

In performing these functions, subject-object and adverbial diathemes, by laying different emphasis on one of them, are complementary: subject-object diathemes predominantly perform function (i) and function (ii), while adverbial diathemes are mostly engaged in function (iii). This situation finds its reflection in the ratio of occurrence: subject-object diathemes usually represent from two-thirds to three-quarters of all the

cases, while adverbial diathemes form the rest. In Malory's text, the proportion is the following:

subject-object diathemes	270	71.2 %
adverbial diathemes	109	28.8 %
	<hr/> 379	<hr/> 100.0 %

In contradistinction to AElfric's text (Svoboda 1981b.124), where the above three functions are well balanced, i.e. performed to the same extent, the diathemes in Malory display a tendency to be more engaged in function (ii) at the expense of function (iii). This can be clearly seen if their predecessors and successors are labelled as belonging to one of the three major classes (non-thematic, thematic, zero), which may, in turn, indicate functions (i), (ii) and (iii) in a most general way.

elements	as T _a -predecessors		as T _a -successors	
non-thematic	82	21.6 %	21	5.5 %
thematic	162	42.7 %	181	47.8 %
zero	135	35.6 %	177	46.7 %
	<hr/> 379	<hr/> 99.9 %	<hr/> 379	<hr/> 100.0 %

As to the syntactic functions of diathemes in general, subject regularly represents more than half, and adverbial the above-mentioned third or quarter of, the total:

T _a functioning as	subject	200	52.8 %
	adverbial	109	28.8 %
	object	44	11.6 %
	complement	5	1.3 %
	vocative	13	3.4 %
	other	8	2.1 %
		<hr/> 379	<hr/> 100.0 %

If we consider the nature of the three semantico-contextual functions of diathemes, it is not surprising to find that the leading word category is that of a noun group (for comments on other categories see sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2):

T _a expressed by	noun group	212	58.3 %
	pronoun	74	19.5 %
	adverb	51	13.5 %

clause	31	8.2 %
adjective	2	0.5 %
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	379	100.0 %

The word-order positions of diathemes and their mutual distribution in Malory's text can be seen from the graph in Fig. 17.

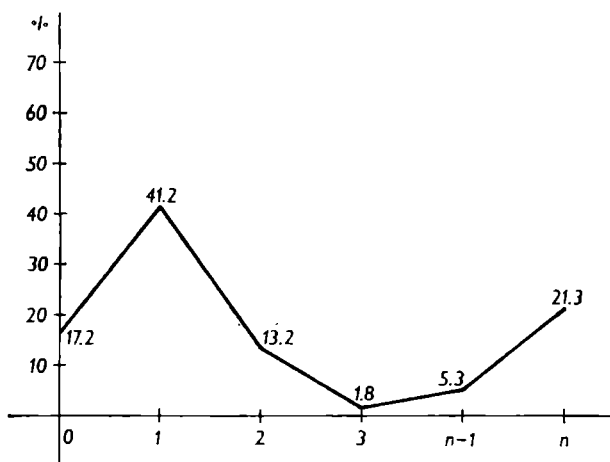


Fig. 17

As can be gathered from what has been said so far about the separate types of thematic elements, diathemes may — in certain respects — be regarded as counterparts of themes proper within the thematic sphere of the clause. On the other hand, however, diathemes display certain features through which they rank as counterparts of rhemes proper within the whole distributional field of the clause. One of these features is the word-order position. If we take a more general view of word-order positions and class them as initial (0, 1, 2), medial (3, 4) and final ($n-1$, n), we find that the proportion of diathemes is the mirror image of that of rhemes proper. This conclusion, based on the analysis of AElfric (see Svoboda 1981b.31), is corroborated by the statistical data drawn from the analysis of Malory:

	diathemes	rhemes proper
initial positions (0, 1, 2)	71.6 %	28.4 %
medial positions (3, 4)	1.8 %	1.4 %
final positions ($n-1$, n)	26.6 %	70.2 %

The relations of diathemes to the other thematic elements on the one hand and to the transitional and rhematic elements on the other, are dealt with in the following section, presented as the conclusion of this paper.

3. CONCLUSION

Among other things, the above description of the various types of thematic elements has shown their place and mutual relations within the thematic sphere of the clause. If we wish to get a more general view of these elements within the system of functional sentence perspective, we have to see them against the background of the functions performed by the elements in the non-thematic sphere of the clause. Since a detailed discussion exceeds the scope of the present paper, we shall make an attempt to show the relevant relations in a general light.

The examination of elements from the viewpoint of functional sentence perspective reveals the existence of two general tendencies displayed by these elements: a tendency to preserve what has come before — in short, a tendency to preserve — and a tendency to differ from what has come before — in short, a tendency to be unique. At first glance the thematic elements may seem to display the tendency to preserve and the non-thematic elements the tendency to be unique. On the grounds of what has been said in the previous section, however, it is clear that even thematic elements participate in displaying the tendency to be unique, while there is no reason for the non-thematic elements to be excluded *a priori* from displaying the tendency to preserve. Let us briefly re-examine the thematic elements from the viewpoint of the above two tendencies.

The ellipted theme proper is the least dynamic of all the thematic elements. It is the most-established element in the thematic sphere; it is in fact established so well that it need not be explicitly expressed at all. It is always fully contextually tied, and it is always a hypertheme (a member of a hyperthematic string). The tendency to preserve is displayed to the utmost; the tendency to be unique is hard to detect.

The (non-ellipted) theme proper is the least dynamic expressed element in the clause. It is well established in the thematic sphere, or at least it is presented as such. It tends to be fully contextually tied and tends to become a hypertheme. The tendency to preserve is very strong; it is in fact so strong that the (non-ellipted) theme proper is the most frequent member of hyperthematic strings (cf. Svoboda 1981b.133). On the other hand, it need not always be a hypertheme even when fully contextually tied (the occurrence with a rhematic predecessor and no successor), and it may perform the distinguishing function between two or more well-established elements (you, he, she, ...) aspiring to the role of theme proper in the given clause. This is where the tendency to be unique can be traced in terms of the ability to differ from other similar items occurring before.

The theme-proper oriented theme conveys a comparatively low degree of communicative dynamism in the clause but is prevented from function-

ing as theme proper by the presence of a less dynamic element performing this function. Similar to theme proper, it tends to be fully contextually tied and tends to become a hypertheme. Hence the tendency to preserve is also very strong. At the same time, however, the theme-proper oriented theme appears only when there are two (or possibly more) items aspiring to the role of theme proper and there is the need to differentiate. This differentiating function is the *raison d'être* of this element. If there is no need to differ, i.e. if there is only one element of theme-proper nature, it does not occur in the thematic sphere of the clause at all. In this respect, it shows more than a trace of the tendency to be unique. In fact, it is unique, but in a rather limited domain, given by contextually tied elements or elements presented as such.

Within the thematic sphere of the clause, the diatheme oriented theme conveys a comparatively high degree of communicative dynamism but is prevented from functioning as diatheme by the presence of a more dynamic thematic element performing this function. It tends to be partly contextually tied or contextually free. It is reluctant to be a hypertheme in the sense that it does not easily become a member of a hyperthematic string. But it tends to be hyperthematic in quite another way; in the majority of cases, it keeps the temporal, spatial and other circumstantial relations together, not by the identity of reference, but by the unity of the temporal sequence, the unity of the spatial arrangement of elements and the unity of their "logical" relations. Hence the tendency to preserve is not so strong as in the case of the less dynamic thematic elements, but it is displayed in its own way. The diatheme oriented theme frequently brings new information into the thematic sphere of the clause, which may be interpreted as the operation of its tendency to be unique.

The diatheme is the most dynamic element within the thematic sphere of the clause. It is a foregrounded element, which is, or is presented as, the least established in the thematic sphere of the given clause. Contextually, it tends to be partly tied or free. It may or may not be a member of a hyperthematic string. It links its own thematic sphere and the preceding thematic or rhematic sphere, and it brings new information into the thematic sphere of the clause. On the grounds of what we know about diathemes in general, we may say that they display both the tendency to preserve and the tendency to be unique in a comparatively high degree.

Before turning our attention to non-thematic elements, we should like to touch upon two points concerning the occurrence of thematic elements in the clause.

If diatheme is defined as the most dynamic and theme proper as the least dynamic element of the thematic sphere of the clause, clauses containing only one thematic element should have both diatheme and theme proper fused into one. In theory, it may be tempting to regard the function of diatheme and that of theme proper (in such cases, of course) as neutralized. The present discussion, however, has clearly shown that the grammatical, semantic and contextual features of diathemes differ considerably from those displayed by themes proper. Hence in clauses with only one thematic element, we regard this element either as diatheme or as theme proper according to which features it tends to display. (Cases where this

cannot be discerned are considered to be multifunctional. For multifunctionality see Firbas 1979.)

Is the occurrence of at least one thematic element the necessary condition for the unimpaired communicative function of the clause? This question may be answered in the negative (cf. Firbas 1982). For the purpose of the present discussion let it suffice to say that a clause can still perform its communicative function if it displays one explicit occurrence of rheme proper and one — at least implicit — occurrence of transition proper. This brings us to the question of non-thematic elements.

The ellipted transition proper (denoted by Tr_{ρ}) is the least dynamic element of the non-thematic sphere of the clause. It ties with the preceding element functioning as transition proper and has no power to change the temporal and modal indications conveyed by this predecessor. Hence it is always a hypertransition, i.e. a transitional element which remains the same in two or more clauses. The tendency to preserve is displayed to the utmost, while the tendency to be unique is hard to detect.

The (non-ellipted) transition proper (denoted by Tr_p) is the least dynamic expressed element within the non-thematic sphere of the clause. It expresses the temporal and modal indications of the predicative kind, which often remain the same in two or more clauses; hence it frequently tends to become a hypertransition. In this respect, it displays a strong tendency to preserve. On the other hand, the required occurrence of transition proper in every clause, the necessity of either confirming or changing the validity of certain temporal and modal indications can be regarded as a special way of bringing new information into the transitional sphere of the clause. This new information rests in the reiterated introduction of the temporal and modal exponents (of the finite verb), enabling clauses to function as unimpaired distributional fields. In this respect, transitions proper display the tendency to be unique in a rather limited domain of temporal and modal indications.

The transition (non-proper) (denoted by Tr) is an element more dynamic than transition proper and one that, roughly speaking, conveys the notional content of the verb. It is in fact a transition-proper oriented rheme. Semantically (and also grammatically), it is closely connected with transition proper, but under some circumstances (in the absence of other elements functioning as rhemes) it becomes rheme proper. Exceptionally, transitions (non-proper) become hypertransitions, but most frequently they are the new items in the transitional sphere. The tendency to preserve is much lower and the tendency to be unique is much higher than in the case of any type of element, transitional or thematic, which has been discussed so far.

The rheme (non-proper) (denoted by R) is in fact a rheme-proper oriented rheme, which is prevented from functioning as rheme proper by the presence of some other element performing this function. So far, it has not yet been subjected to a thorough examination. It seems to defy the tendency to preserve and it frequently appears to be fully engaged in the tendency to be unique.

The rheme proper (denoted by R_p) is the most dynamic of all the elements in the clause. It is mainly responsible for the influx of new infor-

mation into the discourse by bringing information of primary importance into the non-thematic sphere of the clause. The vast majority of rhemes proper represent items which are quite different from what has come before and therefore appear without any predecessors. Contextually, rhemes proper display a strong tendency to be free. Only exceptionally do they appear as partly tied or tied, but in these cases even the "old" items bring new information into the non-thematic sphere and are presented as though they were contextually free. In this respect, diathemes and rhemes proper are functional counterparts. Contextually free diathemes bringing new information into the thematic sphere are presented as *quasi* tied, while contextually tied rhemes proper bringing new information into the non-thematic sphere are presented as *quasi* free. As may be gathered from what has been said so far, the tendency of rhemes proper to be unique is very strong, but the tendency to preserve is also present, although to a small extent. The figures taken from the analysis of Malory's text illustrate this.

elements	as R _p -predecessors		as R _p -successors	
zero	435	89.3 %	388	79.7 %
thematic	41	8.4 %	87	17.9 %
non-thematic	11	2.3 %	12	2.4 %
	<hr/> 487	<hr/> 100.0 %	<hr/> 487	<hr/> 100.0 %

The proportion of thematic and non-thematic predecessors may seem to indicate the extent to which the tendency to preserve is displayed. In relation to their predecessors, however, rhemes proper contain some additional (new) information through which they demonstrate the tendency to be unique (*Soon came Merlin unto the king . . .*, cf. Fig. 13). The analysis of 52 occurrences of rhemes proper with predecessors in Malory's text has revealed that the "old" items are supplied with additional information of the following kinds:

direction and place	19	36.5 %
appearance of the "old" item with a new quality	15	28.8 %
contrast by negation and emphasis	10	19.2 %
simple re-appearance	3	5.8 %
other	5	9.6 %
	<hr/> 52	<hr/> 99.9 %

As to the rheme proper successors, the proportion of zero successors may also indicate the degree to which rhemes proper tend to be unique, while the thematic successors together with the thematic predecessors give us a general idea of the proportion of ties between the rhemes proper and

the thematic spheres of clauses (dedynamizations and rhematic intensifications, respectively).

In spite of considerable differences in degrees of communicative dynamism between the thematic and the non-thematic elements, the elements of the thematic sphere have their counterparts in the non-thematic sphere. Both the ellipted themes proper and the ellipted transitions proper are in fact always hyperthemes and hypertransitions. The tendency to become "hyperclements" (the tendency to preserve) is also very strong with explicitly expressed themes proper and transitions proper, while with theme-proper oriented themes and transitions (non-proper) this tendency is less pronounced. The asymmetry rests in the fact that themes proper or theme-proper oriented themes need not be present in the clause at all (the clause does not have a theme proper), while the — at least implicit — pres-

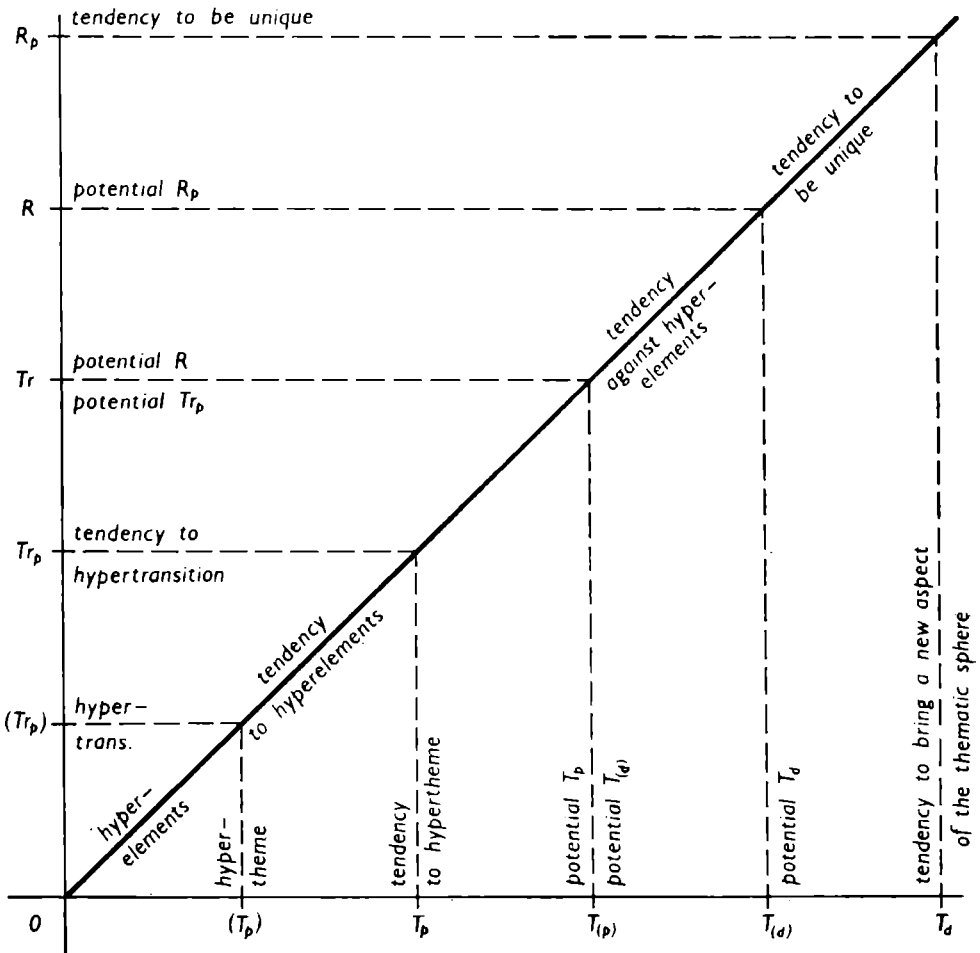


Fig. 18

ence of transition proper is a necessary condition for the clause to function as a distributional field. The common feature of both diatheme oriented themes and rhemes (non-proper) is that they defy the tendency to become hyperelements. They tend to be unique, they tend to perform the most important function within their respective (thematic and non-thematic) spheres, but they are prevented from doing so by the presence of elements that are more dynamic than they are themselves (diathemes and rhemes proper). The common tendency of both diathemes and rhemes proper is to bring new information into their respective spheres, to represent the centres (foci) of these spheres and in this sense to be unique. Among other things, the asymmetry of their functions rests in the fact that, while diatheme need not be present in the clause at all, rheme proper must be present if the clause is to perform its communicative function.

The two-dimensional arrangement in Fig. 18 clearly shows that the two — in a sense competing — tendencies (to preserve and to be unique) may be traced in both the thematic and the non-thematic elements.

By adding the above diagram, we do not want to make the asymmetric relations more symmetric or the differences less different; we only wish to underline the systemic relations between the thematic and the non-thematic elements by showing the common tendencies, which may throw further light on the roles of these elements in the system of functional sentence perspective.

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Abbreviations:

<i>BSE</i>	Brno Studies in English (Prague 1959—64, Brno 1966 f.)
<i>ČMF</i>	Časopis pro moderní filologii (Prague)
<i>PP</i>	Philologica Pragensia (Prague)
<i>PSE</i>	Prague Studies in English (Prague)
<i>PSML</i>	Prague Studies in Mathematical Linguistics (Prague)
<i>SaS</i>	Slovo a slovesnost (Prague)
<i>SPFFBU</i>	Sborník prací filozofické fakulty brněnské univerzity (Brno)
<i>TLP</i>	Travaux linguistiques de Prague (Prague)

TEMATICKÉ PRVKY

Z hlediska posledních výzkumů v oblasti funkční větné perspektivy mají tematické prvky buďto charakter vlastního tématu nebo charakter diatématu. Jsou to eliptická vlastní témata, (neeliptická) vlastní témata a prvky tíhnoucí k vlastním tématům na straně jedné a prvky tíhnoucí k diatématům a diatémata (adverbiální či subjekto-objektová) na straně druhé. Všechny tyto prvky jsou dány do vztahů vzájemných i do vztahů k prvkům sféry netematické, tj. k prvkům přechodovým a rematickým.

