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Language characterology and textual dynamics: a crosslinguistic exploration in English and Scottish Gaelic. Special issue on communicative dynamism
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| Abstract: | <p>Combining the phylogenetic and logogenetic perspectives, in the present paper we compare and contrast the use of textual resources in two languages, English and Scottish Gaelic, as they unfold across a narrative discourse that was originally written in English and subsequently translated into Gaelic by the author herself. In this way we will demonstrate: (i) how the form and function of the different textual resources available in the two languages can be related to their distinctive characterologies; (ii) how the textual resources of each language function differently within the analysed text in terms of the lexicogrammatical work being done at the clausal or inter-clausal level; and (iii) how the different lexicogrammatical functions fulfilled at the clausal level within each of the two languages nonetheless interact to fulfil equivalent functions in terms of the semantic relations indexed between consecutive stretches of text above the clause.</p> <p>Building on these findings, the paper suggests more general points regarding the appropriate units of analysis in (crosslinguistic) discourse analysis and typology and the level of abstraction of linguistic universals.</p> |
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Language characterology and textual dynamics: a crosslinguistic exploration in English and Scottish Gaelic.

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1. Introduction

A text is more than a series of propositions in a logical sequence. The English term *text* is derived from the Latin verb *texere*, to weave, and implies the integration of individual propositions, or clauses, into a larger pattern. More specifically, creating a coherent and user-friendly text involves balancing the continuity and development of the subject matter and indexing the contribution of each new proposition in relation to those around it accordingly. We can refer to this property of linguistic output as *textuality* and to the various linguistic tools that have evolved at the service of textuality within a specific language as the *textual resources* of that language.

According to Halliday, the existence of such specifically textual resources is one of the few universals of language, with similarly abstract universals being the specifically ideational and interpersonal resources, functioning respectively to represent experience in terms of people, things, actions and states and to enact dialogue between speakers and hearers in terms of turn-taking, claims to authority and the expression of attitudes. Taken together, these three categories, or metafunctions (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014:30-31), represent the different communicative needs that languages universally fulfil in their role as social semiotic systems (Halliday 1978). However, the specific structural resources that individual languages have developed to meet the communicative demands within each metafunction are not assumed to be universal. Rather, in the process of language evolution, or *phylogenesis*, the form and function of pre-existing features will affect the way in which later features develop, while these in turn may have feedback effects on existing features. In this way grammars are said to be *emergent* (Hopper 1987), and the non-arbitrary and symbiotic relationship between the emerging features of each specific language is referred to as the *characterology* (Mathesius 1964) of that language.

This perspective on language evolution is summed up in Halliday's (1978:4) oft-quoted maxim that "language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives". We can complement this with the converse perspective that *speakers will communicate according to the potential made available to them by the language in its current state of development*. This is the *logogenetic* perspective of synchronic text production, characterised by Beckner *et al.* (2009:10-11) as follows:

[C]onstrutions as conventionalized linguistic means for presenting different construals of an event, structure concepts and window attention to aspects of experience through the options that specific languages make available to speakers (Talmy 2000). Crosslinguistic research shows how different languages lead speakers to prioritize different aspects of events in narrative discourse (Berman and Slobin 1994)¹.

Combining the phylogenetic and logogenetic perspectives, in the present paper we compare and contrast the use of textual resources in two languages, English and Scottish Gaelic, as they unfold across a narrative discourse that was originally written in English and subsequently translated into Gaelic by the author herself. In this way we will demonstrate: (i) how the form and function of the different textual resources available in the two languages can be related to their distinctive characterologies; (ii) how the textual resources of each language function differently within the

analysed text in terms of the lexicogrammatical work being done at the clausal or inter-clausal level; and (iii) how the different lexicogrammatical functions fulfilled at the clausal level within each of the two languages nonetheless interact to fulfil equivalent functions in terms of the semantic relations indexed between consecutive stretches of text above the clause.

Building on these findings, the paper suggests more general points regarding the appropriate units of analysis in (crosslinguistic) discourse analysis and typology and the level of abstraction of linguistic universals.

In order to compare the textuality of the two texts referred to above, however, it is first necessary to refine what we mean by textuality as a concept and to consider what exactly it is we are comparing and at what level of abstraction texts in different languages are indeed comparable.

2. Questioning our textuality

Chafe (1976:28) offers the idea of *packaging* as a handy and user-friendly working metaphor for textuality in its various manifestations. As he explains:

I have been using the term *packaging* to refer to the kind of phenomena at issue here, with the idea that they have to do primarily with how the message is sent and only secondarily with the message itself, just as the packaging of toothpaste can affect sales in partial independence of the quality of the toothpaste inside.

In other words, and in line with Halliday's (1975:36) concept of the relative independence of the three metafunctions, there is a level of organisation in language that deals with the presentation of the clause over and above its experiential content as a proposition and its interpersonal meanings as a speech act. And, as stated above, the existence of such organisational capacity is considered by Halliday a universal feature of language. However, he makes no such claim of universality for the specific mechanisms through which this packaging is achieved, which raises some significant issues for cross-linguistic typology (and the temptation to compare the different constraints and affordances of string, adhesive tape and staples is strong here).

Starting with the perspective from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the fundamental concept is that the clause as message has a Theme/Rheme structure in which the Theme comprises those elements that serve specifically to relate the clause to its cotext². For Halliday (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014 88-89; Halliday 1970 357-359) the Theme in English comprises everything in the clause up to the first experiential element (participant, process or circumstance). This element is the topical Theme, and is an obligatory element of all unellipted major clauses, with everything preceding the topical Theme being either an interpersonal or textual Theme. While the exact nature of both the structure and function varies across languages³, there seems to be an implicit consensus in the SFL literature that, at some abstract level, Theme is a universal structural-functional category (though this idea is not inherent in the theory). However, the conceptualisation of Theme even at an abstract level has been the matter of some debate, with a notable shift in emphasis between the different editions of *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (IFG), the core text within SFL. (For further discussion of this development see Arús Hita 2007, O'Grady 2017 and Bartlett 2016).

In the first edition of IFG, Halliday (1985:39) defines Theme as:

...the element which serves as the point of departure of the message....that with which the clause is concerned

As can be seen, this definition brings together two concepts that are not necessarily equivalent: the idea of point of departure (POD) and the idea of ‘aboutness’. The second of these, despite its obvious relevance to textuality and its resonance with the concept of ‘topic’ from other traditions, is, however, dropped in later definitions, such as the following from IFG4 (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 89⁴):

The Theme is the element that serves as the point of departure for the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context. The speaker chooses the Theme as his or her point of departure to guide the addressee in developing an interpretation of the message; by making part of the message prominent as Theme, the speaker enables the addressee to process the message.

This later definition restricts the function of Theme to that of an orienting device and nothing more is said of ‘aboutness’. This perhaps reflects the difficulty in limiting aboutness to a single concept, particularly one that is overtly indexed, as illustrated in the following invented example:

1. *When my wife last saw John
a dog had just bitten him.*

At one level, his clause complex is clearly ‘about’ John, the common referent in the two clauses, yet John is Theme in neither of the two individual clauses. Difficulties such as these have led to the abandonment of *topic* as a structural element within Functional Discourse Grammar (FDG), an approach sharing a number of the functional perspectives of SFL. However, taking the later SFL perspective and restricting the function of Theme to that of POD as an orienting device overcomes this problem and redirects our attention as analysts to considerations of when and why ‘topical referents’ are included in the POD and what other positions they may occupy. This allows us to explore the inherent tension in textuality between local and global organisation, between the work of Theme in orienting a clause to its immediate environment and/or to larger units of text. In this way, we can think of distinctions between a *clausal topic* and a *discourse topic*, which need not be the same element, and we can make a distinction within the general category of textuality as an output⁵ between *textualisation* as the clause-by-clause process of creating textuality and *texture* as the structural cohesion across the final global product. We will return to these distinctions below.

At this point it is necessary to add to the mix another approach to textuality and the concept of *téma* from the Prague School. Originating with Mathesius (1983a [1927]; 1983b [1929]) and developed in the work of Daneš (1974) and Firbas (1992), *téma* refers to the element of the clause with the “least communicative dynamism” (LCD) – that is to say, roughly, the element that provides least new information to the clause⁶. How this is calculated depends on the interaction of prosody, syntax, semantics and context dependence (see Firbas 1992 and O’Grady 2016). It is important to point out here, however, that there is a significant difference between *téma* as the LCD element and Theme as a structurally salient element, despite the fact that Halliday cites the Prague School as the basis of his ideas. For example, in the following invented clause, the Theme in SFL terms is ‘a boy’ while *téma* is ‘her’.

2. *A boy bought her the yellow book.*

At the level of clause this may be a minor problem, but at the textual level a major clash is introduced in that Daneš’s (1974) ideas on *thematic progression* between clauses is based on the relationship between the *téma* in consecutive clauses while Fries’s (1981; 1994) adoption and development of Daneš’s work as *method of development* is based on the progression of Hallidayan Themes across a text. Given the very different nature of *téma* and Theme at clause level, this means

either that Daneš's and Fries's elaborations at the textual level are contradictory or that they capture different and complementary aspects of textuality. We will return to this point below.

The distinction between the Prague concept of *téma* and its reconceptualisation in Halliday's category of Theme leads us to another important aspect of textuality and the question of whether we have a single complex relationship in the form of a cline, as in communicative dynamism, or whether there are distinct systemic oppositions in play, specifically between Theme and Rheme in terms of orientation and between focal and background information in terms of informational salience. There is a variety of terminology for the latter distinction, which is based on tonic prominence, with Given and New being the terms used a little misleadingly in SFL, given that Given does not necessarily mean previously introduced and New does not necessarily mean non-recoverable (see O'Grady 2016 for further discussions). In this paper we adopt Halliday's terminology and distinguish between Theme and Rheme as elements of thematicity and Given and New as elements of information structure (IS), with textuality as a more general category covering both. However, whether a *splitting* or a *combining* approach (1981) is adopted, the important point for the purposes of this paper is that textuality is not a function of orientation alone, with the corollary that the method of development of a text is unlikely to be discerned purely through an examination of Themes as is the norm in SFL discourse analytical work.

Following on from this, it is important to note that the full range of lexicogrammatical resources are brought to bear in creating textuality across languages: syntax (e.g. clause initial position of Theme); lexis (e.g. pronouns as (con)textually recoverable referents); morphology (e.g. *-wa/-ga* marking in Japanese); and intonation (e.g. tonic prominence of New). To pick up on the underlying theme (or maybe topic?) of the paper, the way that individual languages employ these resources is a function of the general characterology of each language. In a paper comparing English, Catalan and various Germanic languages, Vallduví and Engdahl (1996) demonstrate the contrasting repercussions on textual organisation and the variety of constructions stemming from the character of English as a syntactically relatively rigid language with free-floating tonic prominence and the character of Catalan as a syntactically loose language with fixed tonic prominence on the final element of the clause nucleus.

While Vallduví and Engdahl's study is important in demonstrating the effects of a language's general characterology on the textual organisation of clauses, as with much work on information structure the paper is limited to a consideration of the propositional content of clauses in terms of the hypothetical questions they answer (see Hasan and Fries 1995:xxix for a similar critique). This idea is illustrated in the following pair of examples from Vallduví and Engdahl (1996: 463):

3. *What about the pipes? What's wrong with them?*
The pipes are RUSTY.

4. *Why does the water from the tap come out brown?*
The PIPES are rusty.

From a more general perspective on textuality, and in particular one that goes beyond clausal or inter-clausal semantics to consider larger units of text, our analysis should not be limited to asking "What questions does this structure answer?" but should also consider "In what directions is this structure pushing the text?".

This was the position in a previous paper (Bartlett 2016), in which the first author considered the problems posed by the different characterologies of Gaelic and English for the general tendencies in SFL referred to above (i) to equate Theme with the first experiential element in the absence of overt

morphological marking; and (ii) to analyse the method of development of a text on the basis of Theme so identified.

More specifically, the paper makes a broad distinction between the characterology of Gaelic as a process-oriented language and English as a participant-oriented language (see also Tomasello 2003:45&46 on “noun-friendly” and “verb-friendly” languages). The underlying logic of this distinction is that the clause in Gaelic construes an event as a process taking place that involves one or more participants while the clause in English construes an event as a specific participant undertaking an activity that may include other participants. Various grammatical arguments were produced to support this distinction, the most basic of which was Gaelic’s highly rigid verb initial structure⁷ and the ‘canonical’ Subject-initial structure of the English clause. One important consequence of this discussion was the idea that the participant-orientation of English and the Subject-initial structure of the canonical clause meant that “that with which the clause is concerned” and the point of departure as an orienting device were generally conflated within the single *language specific* or *emic* feature of Theme in English. However, the same could not be expected of other languages.

This difference in orientation between the two languages therefore presents problems for the concept of Theme and in particular for the analysis of method of development based on Theme alone, a point Bartlett illustrated through analysing examples of texts from Scottish Gaelic and their parallel translations by the same author. Predictably, this demonstrated that an analysis of Theme as the first experiential element could in no way be parallel to the English version of the text which would suggest that the two texts, despite being an original and a translation by the same author, displayed radically different methods of development. However, from here Bartlett developed the idea that the unmarked Theme as the POD of a clause could be equated with the deictic grounding of the text in both time and space and so was better seen as including *both* the nominal and verbal elements that were the first experiential elements in English and Gaelic respectively, though the two languages would afford different relative prominence to each element within the *thematic element* as a single structure. This conceptualisation, which was developed from Cloran’s (e.g. 2010) work on Rhetorical Units (RUs) – explained in more detail below⁸ – eliminated the vast majority of apparent discrepancies in textuality between the two texts, though it left a considerable number still to be accounted for. We will return to a discussion of these and what they might tell us about the contrasting characterologies of English and Gaelic once we have provided a bit more detail firstly about the grammar of Gaelic and secondly about Cloran’s modelling of Rhetorical Units.

3. Gaelic grammar – general characterology and textual resources

Gaelic is classified in traditional Greenberg-style linguistic terminology as a VSO language, but this characterisation misses the point that it is not the lexical verb (or Predicator in SFL terminology) that comes first but the Finite element, which is often, though far from always, conflated with the Predicator. Thus we have:

5. *Dh’itheadh sinn an iasg.*
WOULD EAT/WE/THE/FISH
We would eat the fish.

6. *Bha iad ag innse naidheachdean...*
WERE/THEY/AT/TELLING/NEWS
They were telling news...

(MacDonald 2009:27)

And secondly, there is no Subject according to its definition in SFL as the “modally responsible” argument, i.e. the nominal element that “play[s] an important role as (part of) the interactional nub” of the clause (Hasan and Fries 1995:xxiii-xxiv). This is demonstrated in the extended example below (MacLean 2009:18-19), where only the Finite element is involved in negotiation⁹:

7. *Dh’fhainneachd e an robh mi deiseil...*
 ASKED/HE/interrog/WAS/I/READY
He asked if I was ready

Thuirt mi gu robh,
 SAID/I/THAT/WAS
 I said I was.

agus tha.
 AND/AM
and I am.

Uill, tha mi a’smaoineachadh gu bheil.
 WELL/AM/I /THINKING/THAT/AM
Well, I think I am.

From this we can derive the idea that the first nominal element in the canonical Gaelic clause has some thematic prominence, though, following the idea set out in the previous section, to a lesser degree than the Finite and any conflated Predicators. For present purposes we will refer to this position as realising “minor Theme”.

The idea that the Finite/Predicator receives greater thematic prominence than the participants is further illustrated in the periphrastic passive form with RACH (go) + the infinitive of the Predicator, the most common of four passive-like constructions. This construction is of specific interest as there is a contrast between examples with a full nominal group, which appear in the canonical position after the Finite of RACH, and those with a pronominal form, which appear as possessive adjectives modifying the Predicator as a verbal noun (gerund). Hence, in the latter case it is the Predicator itself which occupies the post-Finite position of minor Theme, while the textual status of the pronoun is that of *téma* or least dynamic element. These ideas are illustrated in examples 8 and 9:

8. *Chaidh an litir a sgrìobhadh an dè.*
 WENT/THE/LETTER/ITS/WRITING/YESTERDAY/+
The letter was written yesterday.

9. *Chaidh mo bhualadh.*
 WENT/MY/STRIKING
I was struck.

In terms of information structure, we would tentatively characterise Gaelic as having at least a very strong tendency to maintain the tonic stress on the last full element of the clause (i.e. not including clitic pronouns, but potentially including each element in a coordinated structure). Importantly, as we shall see below, this applies to the initial element of cleft clauses, as in example 10:

10. *Bu mhise a sgrìobh e.*
 ‘TWAS/ME/THAT/WROTE/IT
 It was **me** that wrote it.

According to Vallduví and Engdahl (1996:476ff), the clause-final placement of the tonic is strictly the case for Catalan, which has a canonical VOS order but which uses pronominalisation and extraposition to remove non-focal elements from the clause and so enable the tonic stress to fall on alternative elements. This is shown in the following modified examples from Vallduví and Engdahl (1996:479), starting with the canonical form (which they label “all-focus” but which would be labelled “all-New” in the Hallidayan tradition):

11. *Se'n va anar el JOAN.*
3sg refl/clitic adverb/3sg pres GO/LEAVE/THE/JOHN
JOHN left.
12. *Él se'n va ANAR.*
3sg pro/3sg refl/clitic adverb/3sg pres GO/LEAVE
He LEFT.
13. *Se'n va ANAR, el Joan.*
3sg refl/clitic adverb/3sg pres GO/LEAVE/THE/JOHN
John LEFT.
14. *El Joan, se'n va ANAR.*
THE/JOHN/3sg refl/clitic adverb/3sg pres GO/LEAVE
John left.

However, unlike Catalan, Gaelic has a strong tendency to stick to the canonical VSO structure, even to the extent of avoiding straight extraposition and absolute Themes, with none of the preposed or postposed alternatives to the canonical form below, either with or without pronominal duplication, being acceptable:

15. *Dh'ith mo bhràthair an t-UBHAL.*
ATE/MY/BROTHER/THE/APPLE
My brother ate the APPLE.
16. **An t-ubhal, dh'ith mo BHRÀTHAIR.*
THE/APPLE/ATE/MY/BROTHER
My BROTHER ate the apple.
17. **An t-ubhal, dh'ith mo BHRÀTHAIR e.*
THE/APPLE/ATE/MY /BROTHER/IT
My BROTHER ate the apple.
18. **Dh'ith an t-ubhal, mo BHRÀTHAIR.*
ATE/THE/APPLE/MY/BROTHER
My BROTHER ate the apple.
19. **Dh'ith e an t-ubhal, mo BHRÀTHAIR.*
ATE/HE/THE/APPLE/MY/BROTHER
My BROTHER ate the apple.

However, Gaelic does allow extraposition if the form of predicated Themes (or what are often called ‘clefts’ in more formal traditions), as these substructures in themselves simultaneously follow the canonical Finite^Participant structure and allow the tonic to fall ‘naturally’ on the participant as the final element (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 123). Note that Gaelic has a distinct copular verb

for 'to be' in identifying processes, IS in the present and BU in the past, as compared with THA and BHA for attributive relational processes. This is the form used for predicated Themes and giving rise to the much parodied 'Tis/'Twas form in Celtic English. We shall nonetheless use this form as a gloss to distinguish the identifying and attributive structures. Note that in the following examples the English sentences could also employ a predicated Theme; the point being made is that this is unmarked form for the Gaelic examples:

20. *B'è mo BHRÀTHAIR a dh'ith an t-ubhal.*
 'TWAS/MY/BROTHER/THAT/ATE/THE/APPLE
My BROTHER ate the apple.

The structure is also used to distinguish between the broad focus of all-New constructions, as in 21 and a narrow focus on the final element of the nucleus, as in 22:

21. *Dh'ith mo bhràthair an t-UBHAL.*
 ATE/MY/BROTHER/THE/APPLE
My brother ate the APPLE.
22. *B'è an t-UBHAL a dh'ith mo bhràthair.*
 'TWAS/THE/APPLE/THAT/ATE/MY/BROTHER
My brother ate the APPLE
 (or possibly, though rather less likely, *The APPLE ate my brother*).

The copula construction, in slightly modified form, can also be used to thematise attributes, Predicators and Adjuncts, and even entire clauses (Byrne 2002:89-96):

23. *'Sann DEARG a tha an t-ubhal.*
 'TIS/RED/THAT/IS/THE/APPLE
The apple is RED.
24. *'Sann an diugh FHÈIN a fhuair mi e.*
 'TIS/TODAY+/ITSELF/THAT/GOT/ME/IT
I got it TODAY.
25. *'Sann a'CLUICH 's a'SNÀMH a bhios sinn fad an latha.*
 'TIS/PLAYING /AND/SWIMMING/THAT/WILL BE/WE/LENGTH/OF THE/DAY
We will be PLAYING and SWIMMING all the day.
26. *Bha duil agam a dhol a-mach a-raoir, ach 'sann a dh'fhuirich mi a-STAIGH.*
 WAS/EXPECTATION/AT ME/TO/GO/OUT/LAST NIGHT/BUT/'TIS/THAT/STAYED/I/IN.
I was expecting to go out last night but (in the end) I stayed IN.

Occasionally the copula itself can be dropped with the predicated Theme remaining in preposed position, as we can see in the following example.

27. *Duine CAOL, TANA a bha ann am Fionnlaigh.*
 MAN/SLENDER/THIN/THAT/WAS/IN /+/FINLAY.
Finlay was a SLENDER, THIN man.

We will now briefly present Rhetorical Units before moving on to the comparative analysis of the two texts.

4. Rhetorical Units: an overview and expansion.

It was suggested above that Rhetorical Units (RUs) as cohesively linked stretches of text with different spatiotemporal orientations are a useful way to account for the majority of apparent discrepancies in thematic analysis between Gaelic as a process-oriented and Finite-initial language and English as a participant-oriented and Subject-initial language. This is because the categorisation of RUs is based on a combination of nominal and verbal elements, in contrast to a thematic analysis based on the first experiential element alone. Nonetheless, and equally as importantly, in providing this spatiotemporal frame, RU analysis does not bleach the important differences in textual progression that result from the different characterologies of the two languages.

In this section we will outline Cloran's original concept of Rhetorical Units (see Cloran 2010 for the most recent overview) and propose some extensions of our own. We will finish with a summary of the advantages of adopting this approach to textual progression, not only for textual analysis – comparative or otherwise – but also for the lexicogrammatical description of individual languages (including English) from a functional perspective.

RUs are semantic units, realised by a combination of lexicogrammatical items that operate beyond the clause (though they are perhaps coterminous with a clause) and below the text (though they are perhaps coterminous with a text). As features of the textual metafunction, RUs index relations within text and between text and context. In terms of context, RUs signal the spatiotemporal relationship between the text itself and the referents within it. Thus, RUs orient the text in space and time or, from the complementary perspective, RUs index what spatiotemporal contexts are being *made relevant* by the speaker for the current purposes of the discourse (Hasan1999). Different RUs are thus said to have distinct rhetorical functions. In terms of context, RUs signal cohesive relationships of different kinds between the stretches of text they delimit.

A single Rhetorical Unit is therefore identified, in Cloran's framework, as a stretch of language having a continuity of reference with respect to the semantic categories of Central Entity (CE) and Event Orientation (EO). The CE is realised lexicogrammatically in English as the Subject of the clause while the EO refers to the temporality and modality of the message, most often signalled in English through the Finite element of the verbal group. Between them, these features, as the name suggests, define the rhetorical function of the message independently of experiential features. So, for example, in example 28, "my brother", as CE, denotes a specific but non-present referent, while the EO is habitual, combining to realise (part of) an Account¹⁰ RU (see Cloran 2010 for a full classification of RUs):

28. *My brother doesn't eat eggs.*

In example 29, in comparison, the CE is a copresent interactant and the EO is concurrent, between them realising (part of) a Commentary RU:

29. *I am standing here before you today...*

The combination of a category CE and present simple EO realises a Generalisation, as in example 30:

30. *Penguins don't eat kangaroos.*

And in example 31 the past marking indexes (part of) a Recount RU:

31. *These events led to terrible destruction.*

It is worth pointing out at this point that the current classification grew out of discourse analytical work and comprises those categories that have been deemed useful and sufficient for the purposes of the projects undertaken. This does not preclude further categorisation and distinguishing past actions in terms of spatial orientation, i.e. the location and generalisability of the CEs, would seem an obvious candidate for such refinement.

As stated above, RUs are said to extend as long as the CE/EO conjunct remains constant. So, the stretch of text in Example 6 represents two RUs, as shown by the boxing:

| |
|--|
| <p>1. <i>Commentary:</i></p> <p>I am standing here before you today</p> <p>as I wish to discuss the events of the past week.</p> |
| <p>1.1 <i>Recount:</i></p> <p>These events led to terrible destruction</p> <p>and have deeply shocked us all</p> |

Turning to the contextual aspect of RUs and the cohesive ties between them, the two RUs in this case are said to display the structural relationship of *embedding* as the semantic content of the first RU is picked up in the Theme of the first message of the second (cf. Daneš's (1974) linear progression). It is suggested that in such cases the embedded RU fulfils some function within the matrix RU. With *expansions*, in contrast, the second RU is cohesively related to a preceding RU but has no function within it (Cloran 2010:46). Expansions are realised when the semantic content of the preceding text is taken up in the Rheme of the first message of the following RU, as in the following example:

| |
|--|
| <p>1. <i>Account:</i></p> <p>Spain is a beautiful country.</p> <p>It boasts a warm climate and a lively culture.</p> |
| <p>2. <i>Recount:</i></p> <p>Many famous artists have lived in Spain over the years.</p> |

This is labelled an expansion as, by use of this structure, the writer is now in a position to talk about artists rather than Spain itself. Note the different ways of boxing and numbering the RUs for embeddings and expansions, reflecting the structural-semantic relations between them.

Two more relationships hold between sequential RUs. There may be discontinuous RUs, where an RU relates back to a stretch of text prior to the immediately preceding one; and there may be cases where there is no link at all between an RU and preceding text, in which case, following Halliday and Hasan's definition, we have a new text¹¹.

RUs thus provide us with a semantic unit above the clause as message and they do so in a dynamic and incremental fashion, with units opening up the potential for what is to follow, rather than realising elements within larger hierarchical structures as with, say, Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST; Mann, Matthiessen and Thompson 1992), which seems better suited to the description of planned texts viewed post hoc as products.

Developing the notion of RUs, Bartlett (2016) suggested that as well as signalling shifts in the abstract qualities of events and entities, it would also be useful to mark shifts between particular instances. Such operations remain within the textual metafunction as they relate to textual movement rather than the experiential properties of the different events and entities. In this regard, Bartlett questioned Cloran's original label "Central Entity", as the element being referred to is being categorised in terms of its abstract orientation, just as the event is. Bartlett therefore suggested Even Orientation and Entity Orientation for Cloran's original elements, with Central Event and Central Entity being used for specific referents. To avoid confusion, Cloran's original abbreviations were discarded and replaced with EvO (event orientation, Cloran's EO), EntO (entity orientation, Cloran's CE), CEv (central event, an additional category) and CEnt (central entity, not as per Cloran but an additional category). A suggestion not made in Bartlett (2016) but following logically from this reclassification is that a shift in CEnt can be considered new RU (or at least a sub-RU). Given the general tendency for processes to change much more rapidly than participants, the desirability of designating shifts in CEnt as sub-RUs of some kind remains moot at this point.

We suggest one further modification to Cloran's RU classification, this time with regard to the analysis of cohesive links rather than to the classification of RU type. Given that information structure and the placement of tonic prominence are an essential element of the textual metafunction along with thematicity, it seems appropriate to consider information structure within the analysis. This will allow us to distinguish between, and so account for, shifts in orientation in which the default conflation of Theme and Given remains in operation and those indexed by the marked conflation of Theme and New.

To summarise, the advantages of adopting an enhanced RU approach to textual progression are that:

- RUs provide a fuller spatiotemporal grounding than thematic analysis alone while allowing for different orientations between languages;
- as semantic units, RUs do not presuppose the form of lexicogrammatical realisation across languages (and this opens up the possibility of considering *téma* rather than or as well as Theme, even for English);
- as semantic units are more abstract than lexicogrammatical units, they are more comparable across languages. RUs therefore allow for greater cross-linguistic comparison, while not assuming full equivalence between semantic categories;
- RUs account for an analysis of textual progression at three distinct but interrelated levels: between clauses, between stretches of text and between levels of abstraction;
- RUs go beyond, but do not preclude, approaches to information structure based on propositional content and recoverability, providing further insights into different combinations of Given/New and Theme/Rheme.

We now turn to a discussion of the selection of the data set and the means of marking up examples for analysis.

5. Data set and identification of thematic (non-)equivalence

For the present paper we have taken as our data set all ranking clauses in Chapter 5 of *Còco is Crùbagan* (MacDonald 2009), the chapter from which the fragment analysed in Bartlett (2016) was taken. By ranking clauses we mean main clauses, finite subordinate clauses and finite projected clauses, as these are all clauses which offer genuine choices in thematic structure. There is an audio recording of the Gaelic text, on which our analyses of tonic prominence are based, but not of the English original.

In the Gaelic version of the text there are 214 ranking clauses but only 167 in the original English. This discrepancy is to be accounted for mainly in terms of the common translation of English¹² non-finite clauses and nominalisations by finite clauses and also through periphrasis, both of which may have thematic implications. Moreover, additional elements have been added in the Gaelic retelling of the story, particular in the closing. There are also several elements that have been omitted in the Gaelic retelling, but these are significantly fewer.

An example of both nominalisation and periphrasis occurs in example 32 (clauses 92-94 in the Gaelic text):

32. *Ghnog Mamaidh an doras//is dh'inns I "gu robh sinn air tighinn.*
 KNOCKED/MAMMY/THE/DOOR//AND/SAID/SHE/THAT/WERE/WE/AFTER/COMING
Mammy announced our arrival at the door.

Once the dual text had been classified into the two sets of ranking clauses we went through these to mark up the Finite and first participant (P1) in Gaelic and the Mood element (Subject and Finite) in English. The term *thematic element* will provisionally be used as an etic term to refer to these emic combinations. Any preceding features were analysed as textual, interpersonal or marked experiential Theme, though these will not be discussed in this paper. Where the thematic elements corresponded between the two versions of the text the two clauses were considered to be thematically equivalent (differences in thematic prominence between the process and the participant in the two languages notwithstanding). In addition, clauses were considered *near-equivalent* if minor variations in thematic structure could be accounted for either in terms of nominalisation/periphrasis, as above, or a rephrasing of events as in examples 33 and 34, where the interlinear gloss is the literal translation of the Gaelic:

33. *nuair a bha an t-side math.*
 when the weather was good
while the sun shone
34. *Bha sruban is feusgan is muirsgian ann.*
 There were cockles, mussels and razorfish.
The sands were also the home of cockles, mussels and razorfish.

The former case is clearly a minor rewording while the second case involves a stylistic alteration rather than a lexicogramatically motivated option (though textuality may play some part in motivating the stylistic choice). Another case that we analysed as near-equivalents were transitivity structures where the canonical form entails converse thematisation between the two languages, such as example 35:

35. *Bha fios agam.*
 Knowledge was at me.
I knew.

A more complex example occurs in 36:

36. *Chuir an t-àite-teine seo iongnadh mòr orm*
 This fireplace put great surprise on me
I was fascinated by the fireplace

As these differences are inscribed in the lexicogrammars of the two languages they can be considered straight translations not involving genuine choices in textuality within the process of text production, which is the focus of the current paper. However, they do add to the idea that Gaelic and English contrast in terms of participant and process orientation, and we would expect such differences to manifest themselves both phylogenetically and logogenetically.

One further case that we decided not to count as textually divergent for the purposes of this paper is the use in Gaelic of the copula for what can be analysed as modal Adjuncts (though the English original often has Circumstances of time). In such cases the structures following the copula construction have a (roughly) equivalent thematic element in the two languages, as in examples 37-39:

37. *cha mhòr nach robh e a ruighinn mullach na taighe*
 NOT/BIG/THAT NOT/WAS/IT/AT/REACHING/TOP/OF THE/HOUSE
it...nearly reached the ceiling
38. *cha b'fhada gus an do laigh mo shùil orra*
 NOT/'TWAS/LONG/TILL.THAT/past marker/LAY/MY/EYE/ON THEM
we soon fixed our eyes on what was stored in them
39. *Is gann gum b'urrainn dhomh feitheamh gu faicinn*
 'TIS/SCARCE/THAT/'TWAS/POSSIBLE/TO ME/TO WAIT/TO/SEE
We were extremely curious to find out

Again, however, it is worth noting that these examples demonstrate a less participant-oriented perspective in the Gaelic structures and the decision to count such clauses as equivalent could be questioned in future research. Note also that the last of these examples also includes another converse-transitivity structure, this time for dynamic modality, repeated as example 40:

40. *b'urrainn dhomh*
'twas possible for me
I could

Grouped together, the equivalent and near-equivalent clauses accounted for 188 (88%) of the total Gaelic clauses. These cases are not discussed further here, despite the fact that both cases present interesting features with respect to the different textualities of the two languages. For the purposes of this paper we will focus on those 26, or 12% of, Gaelic clauses that demonstrate a non-equivalent textual organisation where there was a genuine option to mirror the English structure.

We will finish this section with three brief notes on terminology. Firstly: As discussed above, there is no assumption that Theme is a universal category across languages nor, in this cases where such a function does exist, that it will equate to the first experiential element in the clause functioning as the point of departure for the message. Nonetheless, given that (i) there is a general agreement that clause-initial positioning is *in some way* textually significant; and (ii) that in the absence of overt morphological marking we have been assuming that clause initial positioning is the only viable index for Theme in Gaelic; then for the purposes of the present paper we shall refer to the first experiential element as (topical) Theme and placement in such a position as thematisation. It will be clear that in this case Theme will refer to the SFL concept and not to the Prague School concept of

téma. Secondly: given that, on the one hand, the term *topic* has been employed in a multitude of different ways in the literature and, on the other, that attempts to define and identify topical elements across clauses and stretches of text have produced varied and conflicting results, we shall use non-technical and periphrastic language in order to discuss the first appearance, continuation and resumption of referents and their relation to clause structure. In other words, rather than trying to identify elements such as *Given Topic* or *Resumed Topic*, we will rather say that a referent in a particular place in the clause structure has been picked up from prior context or freshly introduced, etc., and then discuss what this might mean for textual development. Thirdly, we will refer to phonologically stressed elements as tonic, so for instance ‘tonic Theme’, so as to avoid the presuppositions latent in Halliday’s term *New* along with deliberations of the scope of the *New* (or *focus*), which are not immediately relevant to the present paper.

6. Analysis of non-equivalent thematic structures

Of the 26 thematic structures demonstrating non-equivalence between the Gaelic and English versions of the text, 21 are copula structures, akin to predicated Themes in English, as discussed above, though far more versatile in their Gaelic manifestation, as will be explored below. That the overwhelming majority of textually non-equivalent clauses are structured this way is hardly surprising given the absence of extraposition as a potential textual mechanism in Gaelic and the corresponding Finite-initial structural constraint on the nucleus of the clause. It is worth pointing out that the ratio of 193:21 non-copular to copula structures is remarkably close to the 9:1 ratio posited by Halliday (2005 [1991]:48) for unmarked vs marked linguistic structures as a general feature of language. This would suggest that, as an available opposition within a system of alternations, the Gaelic copula structure is more akin to the category of marked Theme in English than to the English predicated Theme, of which there are no examples in the text.

We will cover the textual analysis in three parts, roughly corresponding to three clusters of non-equivalent structures that occur in clauses 4-9, 11-18 and 172-181 of the Gaelic text. The first cluster will be used to illustrate in more detail the general idea expounded above that Gaelic and English display different behaviour in terms of process-orientation and participant orientation respectively. However, while the analysis of these different orientations above was largely restricted to clause structure as a phylogenetic development, the textual analysis demonstrates the same principle occurring as a logogenetic process. As stated above, such continuities would be expected in discussing languages from a characterological perspective. The analysis of the second and third clusters will illustrate two distinct ways in which Gaelic utilises the copula structure, in conjunction with other lexicogrammatical features, in order to signal the equivalent categories of textual progression and cohesion as the radically different English structures in the English original.

Gaelic Clauses 4-9: Process orientation

In this short section we look at five instances of thematically non-equivalent constructions that occur in consecutive clauses within a single sentence very early on in the text. These five instances fall into two types, with the examples in each case coordinated with ellipsis of the Finite. The two types are presented below on separate lines but as there is a redistribution of elements between the two versions, we present the complete English version as example 43 only after the two Gaelic lines in examples 41 and 42. As the Gaelic examples constitute a partial rewrite we have included a literal translation as well as the usual interlinear gloss. Thematic elements are underlined for each language.

41. *Bha mòine ri buain, na caoraich rin rùsgadh, obair-àitich ri dèanamh*

WAS/PEAT/TO ITS/HARVEST/THE/SHEEP/TO THEIR/SHEERING/HOUSEWORK/TO ITS DOING

There was peat to be harvested, the sheep to be shorn, housework to be done

42. *dh'feumte am buntàta a chur agus sealltainn ris na clèibh ghiomaich.*
HAD TO BE/THE/POTATO/ITS/PUTTING/AND/LOOKING/TO/THE/CREELS/OF LOBSTERS
it was necessary to plant the potatoes and to attend to the lobster pots.
43. *We had to...attend to crops, peat cutting and sheep shearing, as well as everyday tasks...Pappy went lobster fishing....*

In the first three Gaelic clauses there is an existential structure with a passive infinitive which can be analysed as a post-nominal qualifier. In terms of the thematic element, therefore, the central entities are “peat to be harvested”, “sheep to be shorn” and “housework to be done”, which all display a clear process-orientation in contrast to the ‘we’ of the English original.

This idea that the process is the focus rather than the participant is similarly clear still in the last two clauses, where we have the impersonal structure *dh'feumte* with no overt Agent/Actor and with the activities of planting potatoes and attending to the creels as the central entities in the thematic element.

In this short stretch of text, the Gaelic represents a significant rewrite of the English, but the corresponding ideas are all still present and can be compared for the textual orientation of their presentation. And in all cases we see a significant difference, in that the English presents these five chores from a participant-oriented perspective – what ‘we’ had to do or what Pappy did – whereas the Gaelic presents the chores in impersonal structures that focus on the activities themselves, with no mention at all of ‘us’ or ‘Daddy’. This seems to be all the more significant given that the English version was the original text and so the extra information cannot be explained as a later clarification. Important to note in this regard is that in all cases the author has chosen to thematise the activity over the participant where a participant-oriented presentation equivalent to the English was not only possible in Gaelic but would have sounded in no way “out of place”. In other words, we have the same story told through distinct thematic progressions independently of lexicogrammatical constraints, and this raises its own questions about cross-linguistic comparisons and textuality as a culturally-contingent stylistic or registerial variable.

Gaelic Clauses 11-18: Expansions.

We now turn to a different set of non-equivalent Thematic structures and the use of copula constructions, which, while not demanded by cotextual features, are at least motivated by them. In the first example we have two consecutive copula constructions, which occur at the end of the first written paragraph and the beginning of the second in the Gaelic text. These examples follow hard on the heels of the stretch of text analysed above, in which the more arduous summer tasks were catalogued, with only a single transitional clause signalling a shift to more mundane tasks. Below we present the transitional clause along with the two clauses following, to be analysed in greater depth, and one further clause to show how the text continues. As is often the case, there are some variations between the two versions but, in these instances, such variation does not affect the thematic analysis:

44. *bha seo cho math ris an obair àbhaisteach, a dol dhan bhùth is biadh a thoirt do dhaoine is chreutairean*
 WAS/THIS/AS/WELL/AS/THE/WORK/USUAL/TO/GO/TO
 THE/SHOP/AND/FOOD/TO/GIVE/TO/PEOPLE/AND/CREATURES
 this was as well as the usual tasks, going to the shops and feeding people and animals
as well as everyday tasks such as shopping
45. *B’e Mamaidh a bhiodh a’s ealltainn as dèidh na cuid seo dhan obair.*
 ‘TWAS/MUMMY/THAT/WOULD/BE/LOOKING/AFTER/+¹³/THE/SHARE/THIS/OF
 THE/WORK
 It was Mammy who looked after that side of the work.
Mammy often planned shopping expeditions in the summer.
46. *B’e deagh chothrom a bh’ann do Mhamaidh falbh dhan bhùth agus faighinn a-mach às an taigh le deagh shìde.*
 ‘TWAS/EXCELLENT/OPPORTUNITY/THAT/WAS/IN IT/TO/MAMMY/GO/TO
 THE/SHOP/AND/GET/OUT/FROM/THE/HOUSE/WITH/EXCELLENT/WEATHER
 ‘Twas a great opportunity for Mammy to go to the shop and to get out of the house with lovely weather.
It was a welcome break for Mammy to go shopping:
47. *Bhiodh i a’tadhal air daoine a b’aithne dhi air an rathad.*
 WOULD BE/SHE/VISITING/ON/PEOPLE/THAT/‘TWAS/KNOWN/TO
 HER/ON/THE/ROAD
 She would be visiting people she knew along the way.
it meant she could visit friends and socialise.

Focusing on the copula clauses, we see in both cases that the same participant is included within the thematic element for both Gaelic and English, though there is a difference in the constructions used in the two languages in each case. The first of these is repeated below. Thematic elements are underlined and tonic elements are in bold for the Gaelic examples (there is no recording of the English text):

48. *B’e Mamaidh a bhiodh a’s ealltainn as dèidh na cuid seo dhan obair.*
 ‘Twas Mammy who would be looking after that share of the work.
Mammy often planned shopping expeditions in the summer.

As can be seen, as well as the differences in the thematic elements between the two versions, there is also a rewrite involved. Despite these differences, however, the two versions display suitably similar characteristics in terms of textual development. As the immediately preceding cotext in both cases refers to shopping (the anaphoric antecedent of “that share of the work”) and the summer time is introduced at the beginning of the paragraph, the two versions display cotextual cohesion while shifting the text to what Mammy did. More specifically, what we see in both cases, in terms of the general progression of the text, is a movement of focus away from a catalogue of the general chores of the summer, which has served as an introductory framing, to the specific details of Mammy’s shopping expeditions, which will provide the anecdotes for the rest of the chapter. In terms of RU structure, as outlined above, this would be considered an *expansion*. In the case of English, the shift from one RU to an expanding RU is realised through the presentation of a freshly introduced element as the Theme of the first clause of the new RU combined with the inclusion of a

previously introduced element within the Rheme. This is a reversal of the usual trend to present old information in the Theme and fresh information in the Rheme. Unfortunately, as there is no English recording, we cannot further this analysis through a discussion of tonic placement.

As stated above, in the Gaelic text we have the same participant, Mammy, included within the thematic element of the clause. It is therefore necessary to account for the use of the copula structure in this instance when, from a purely clause-level lexicogrammatical point of view, the less-marked non-copula construction, as in the English, was a systemic option. In order to provide a plausible explanation for this, it is necessary to repeat the idea from Bartlett (2016), referenced above, that, even in cases where Gaelic and English show equivalence in terms of the thematic element as a unit, within that unit Gaelic has the Finite first as one manifestation of its process orientation while English has the Subject first as a manifestation of its contrasting participant orientation. From this it would make sense that, for English, the introduction of a new participant as Theme, potentially carrying tonic prominence, is sufficient indication of a shift in RU, without any need to introduce a marked syntactic structure. However, in the case of Gaelic, the unmarked Finite-initial structure would not signal the shift as effectively as the new focal element, Mamaidh in this instance, would not be the primary Theme. Moreover, as explained above, its tonic stress is reserved for the final element in the nucleus of the clause, which would here rule out Mamaidh. The use of the copula structure, therefore, serves to promote Mamaidh to primary Theme, while also enabling it to carry tonic prominence, and so more clearly indexes the shift in textual orientations as a new RU begins. This example, therefore, serves to demonstrate how the textual devices of the two languages are differentially deployed in signalling a comparable shift in RUs and even where the same participant is included within the thematic elements of the two versions of the text.

In the example 49, again reproduced from above, we see a very similar use of the copula construction as the focus moves from Mammy's shopping expeditions as a contrast to the other work on the croft, and onto the opportunities this gave her to see friends, an idea that is developed in the following clause, also included here:

49. *B'è deagh chothrom a bh'ann do Mhamaidh falbh dhan bhùth agus faighinn a-mach às an taigh le deagh shìde. Bhiodh i a'tadhal air daoine a b'aithne dhi air an rathad. 'Twas a **great opportunity** for Mammy to go to the shop and to get out of the house with lovely weather. She would be visiting people she knew along the way. It was a welcome break for Mammy to go shopping: it meant she could visit friends and socialise.*

Here again we have an expansion signalled in Gaelic through the combination of a tonic Theme enabled through the copula construction. Note here, however, that the English version uses an extrapositional structure very similar in form to a predicated Theme to achieve the textual shift¹⁴. This would appear to be as the thematic element is an Attribute in a relational clause and these cannot be thematised as easily as other participants such as Actor or Sensor. Such constructions are not possible in Gaelic without the use of the copula, as discussed above.

Immediately following this we have another copula construction as the opportunities for Mammy to see friends are now further reconstrued through the eyes of the children, including the author:

50. *B'è àm toilichte¹⁵ a bh'ann dhuinne cuideachd, oir bha sinn a'coinneachadh ri muinntir eile agus a'faicinn rudan ùra, agus bha seo na ionnsachadh dhuinn. 'Twas a **happy time** for us too, for we were meeting other **people** and seeing new **things**, and this was an education for us.*

It was always exciting for us as well: we had an opportunity to widen our circle of friends and see new things. It was very much a voyage of discovery.

Of particular interest in this last example is that the Gaelic closes with a *non-cleft* version of the experiential structure in the earlier examples: *bha seo na ionnsachadh dhuinn/that was an education for us*. The alternative structure with the predicated Theme *b'è ionnsachadh a bh'ann dhuinn/'Twas an education that it was for us* would have been perfectly grammatical, but in this case the clause functions as a summary of the RU, with non-tonic Theme and tonic Rheme, rather than a topical switch and, as such, the copula structure is unnecessary.

After this flurry of non-equivalent thematic structures over the first fifteen clauses there is a marked lull, with only a further eight instance in the next 156 clauses before the next cluster. This thinning out of the copula structures coincides with a switch in rhetorical function from the introductory material that sets the tone of the chapter - the progressive narrowing of focus from the summertime chores to Mammy's work and the reconstrual of her shopping trips as times of adventure for the children - and onto the anecdotal episodes as individual events. This could be taken to suggest that the copula construction as a thematic device is employed to realign the text, opening it up to new directions, rather than pushing the narrative forward directly. In other words, not all Themes are equal but signal different degrees of shift and have scope of variable amounts of text (see also Bartlett 2016 and O'Grady & Bartlett, this volume). This idea will be developed in the following section in relation to the second cluster of copular structures.

Indeed, a quick scan of the whole book suggests that copula constructions occur more at the beginning of chapters and also at the beginning of paragraphs, which would back up this interpretation. There are seeming exceptions, as in the following example, which appears towards the end of the last of nine paragraphs describing the visit to Kirsty's house and appears to be summing up the story. However, there are three clauses that follow this and which allow the author to reconstrue the visit as a treasured memory that has lasted throughout the years:

51. *B'è ceilidh math a rinn sinn aig taigh Ciorstaidh, is bidh cuimn' agam air gu brath. An dèidh iomadh bliadhna thill mi air ais chun na cagailte bhlàth aice is cha robh dad air atharrachadh.*
'Twas a good get-together we had at Kirsty's house and I will always remember it.
After many years I returned to her warm hearth and nothing had changed.
The visit to Kirsty's house was a memorable one, and we returned many times to the warm kernel of her hearth, home and heart. I returned many years later to visit Kirsty for old times' sake, and not one thing had changed.

It is also noteworthy that none of the 17 clauses that comprise the last three paragraphs of the chapter use the copula construction, again suggesting this construction is used to introduce new directions rather than to close off existing avenues.

Gaelic Clauses 172-181: Elaborations

From the examples in the previous section it could be argued that the copula construction in Gaelic serves merely to allow tonic prominence on a freshly introduced Theme corresponding and that there is very little more than this to account for in terms of different textual strategies as they relate to deeper and more wide-ranging differences in characterology between the two languages. However, the cluster of copula constructions in the extract below take us beyond such an account in

that the fresh Theme indexed through the copula construction in Gaelic is not part of the thematic element in English.

52. *Chùm sinn oirnn dhachaidh air monadh is fraoch is cnuic is grobain*
 KEPT/WE/ON US/HOME/ON/MOOR/AND/HEATHER/AND/HILLS/AND/BUMPS
 We kept on home over moor and heather and hill and bumps
We tramped and trudged over many humps and bumps and hillocks,
53. *gus an do ràinig sinn an ath thaigh.*
 TILL/WE/past/REACHED/THE/NEXT/HOUSE
 till we reached the next house.
until it was time to stop at the next house.
54. *B’e taigh beag eile a bha seo air bàrr cnuic,*
 ‘TWAS/HOUSE/SMALL/OTHER/THAT/WAS/THIS/ON/TOP/OF A HILL
 ‘Twas another small house that **this** was, on top of a **hill**,
this was another little cottage that stood high on a hill.
55. *Agus bha dà bhràthair a’fuireach ann, Ruairidh is Fionnlaigh.*
 AND/WERE/TWO/BROTHERS/STAYING/IN IT/RODERICK/AND/FINLAY
 and two brothers were living in it, Roderick and Finlay.
In it lived two bachelor brothers, Roderick and Finlay.
56. *Cha robh iad idir coltach ri chèile.*
 NOT/WERE/THEY/AT ALL/LIKE/TO/EACH OTHER
 They weren’t at all like each other.
They did not look at all alike.
57. *Duine caol, tana a bh’ann am Fionnlaigh.*
 MAN/SLENDER/THIN/THAT/WAS/IN/+/FINLAY
 A narrow, thin man was Finlay.
Finlay was lean and serious and had an air of sophistication about him.
58. *Bha e air a dhreasaigeadh ann an deise gorm, briogais, peitag is seacaid is lèine Kilmarnock.*
 WAS/HE/ON/HIS/DRESSING/IN/+/SUIT/BLUE/TROUSERS/WAISTCOAT/AND/JACKET/
 AND/SHIRT/KILMARNOCK
 He was dressed in a **blue** suit, trousers, **waistcoat** and **jacket**, and a **Kilmarnock** shirt.
He was dressed in navy blue serge trousers, waistcoat to match, and a Kilmarnock shirt.
59. *B’e duine sgiobalta, stòlda a bh’ann*
 ‘TWAS/MAN/AGILE/THAT/WAS/IN HIM
 ‘Twas an agile, **serious** man that he was
 N/A
60. *agus, a rèir coltais a’coimhed às dèidh an taighe.*
 AND/ACCORDING TO/+/APPEARANCE/LOOKING/AFTER/THE/HOUSE

and apparently looking after the **house**.
He was obviously the one in charge of the household duties

61. *Thòisich e sa mhionaid air deasachadh **aoigheachd** dhuinn.*
STARTED/HE/IN THE/MINUTE/ON/PREPARING/HOSPITALITY/FOR US
He immediately started preparing hospitality for us.
and soon started preparations to offer us hospitality.
62. *A'nis, b'e duine cnaqach tiugh a bh'ann an Ruaraidh*
NOW/'T WAS/MAN/BULKY/THICK/THAT/WAS/IN/+/RODERICK
Now, 'twas a bulky thickset man that Roderick was
Roderick, on the other hand, was short and sturdy...
63. *agus bha esan a'dèanamh obair a-muigh.*
AND/WAS/HE/DOING/WORK/OUTSIDE
And he was working outside
He was obviously responsible for the outdoor tasks.

The first instance of non-equivalent Themes appears in clause 54. In the Gaelic clause we have the fresh idea “taigh beag eile” (another small house) as the predicated Theme and the anaphoric element as Rheme. However, the converse applies to the original English “this was another little cottage”. We see this exact contrast in patterning repeated for clauses 57, 59 and 62.

Considering these clauses within their contextual environment we can see that they fulfil a different type of rhetorical move from the *expansions* analysed in the section above. In the present examples we see a rhetorical shift from a past event to a past description¹⁶. As stated above, in the English version the previously mentioned referent, “the next house”, is picked up in the Theme of the initial clause of the new RU. Structurally, therefore, this move is not an expansion, as in the examples in the previous section, but is rather the opening of an *embedded* RU which functions to elaborate on a previous referent. Turning to the Gaelic clauses, we have the same functional relationship of elaboration, but this is realised through a different structural configuration from the English, with the elaborating element as a predicated Theme and the elaborated element in the Rheme. What distinguishes expansions and embeddings in Gaelic is that in the case of expansion the thematised element is a participant, while for embeddings it is an attribute. Clearly, however, the data analysed have presented only a limited number of instances and these exemplify only a few of the possible variables with regard to the nature of the participant and process types that may be involved in rhetorical shifts.

In terms of the placement of tonic elements for embeddings in Gaelic, the stress in clause 59 is on the fresh elaborating information, as expected. In 57 and 62, however, it is on the anaphoric referent in each case, but as these are contrastive elements derived from a common Theme in 63 this too is to be expected. Nonetheless, even in these cases the use of the dual structure inherent in the predicated Theme allows the attributes in each case to receive a degree of tonic prominence. The tonic placement in 54 remains difficult to explain. To say that the clause is contrasting the present house with the one just visited would be a possible explanation, but this seems weak as the experiential content of the clause is limited to expressing the similarity rather than any contrast between the two.

7. Concluding discussion

In the analyses above we have shown that while the lexicogrammatical resources of both Gaelic and English can be said to include an element functioning as Theme, in other words they manipulate the salient properties of clause-initial to signal a Point of Departure for each message, neither the function of this element nor its structural properties are identical between the two languages. In terms of form we have seen two areas of divergence: (i) in the canonical clause, Gaelic will thematise the Finite, potentially conflated with the Predictor whereas English thematises a specific participant; (ii) the predicated Theme is used more frequently in Gaelic than in English. In terms of function, the most significant difference would appear to be that whereas English overwhelmingly uses Theme to signal the continuation or switch of participant focus, Gaelic varies things, thematising fresh participants in the case of rhetorical expansions but thematising attributes in the case of embedded elaborations. Linking form and function, we see that in both cases, at least in the examples analysed here, Gaelic uses the predicated Theme whereas English uses unmarked Theme. This can be explained in terms of a more general characterology for each language. As a participant-oriented language with canonical Subject-initial structure, English maintains its focus on the participants, whether these are constant or changing, through thematic focus. Predicated information is therefore generally in the Rheme. Gaelic, on the other hand, as a process-oriented language with canonical Finite/Predictor-initial structure, is more likely to thematise information from the predicate, including attributes. As in English, these are likely to receive tonic prominence to index their fresh status, but owing to their clause initial placement and Gaelic's strong constraints on tonic placement, then a predicated Theme is employed to 'naturalise' the tonicity of the clause. In such cases participant tracking is not a formally indexed feature of Gaelic text, with continuing referents identifiable through the bundle of interacting features that mark out the *téma*. When, on the other hand, a participant is selected for thematic focus in Gaelic – for example, when there is a significant shift in the direction of the text – then there is similar recourse to a marked structure to enable the extraposition and subsequent tonic prominence of the first participant.

An important point to be drawn from this is that the participant-focus of English and the canonical Subject-initial ordering crates a tendency for a highly topical element to be included in the Theme and this may be the root cause for the confusion between Theme as point of departure and Theme as that which the clause is about. It therefore means that, for English, tracking Themes across a text is a viable approach to identifying the Method of Development. As should be clear from the arguments so far, this is a language-specific situation which should not be generalised to languages other than English where a topical element may simply be the unmarked *téma*.

Returning to a distinction made in Bartlett (2016), we can say that, as a result of these different characterologies, English tends to focus on the *texture* aspect of textuality in that formalised participant-tracking attends to the shifting focuses of the text as a whole product (the global work referred to above), whereas Gaelic tends to focus on *textualisation* as the more localised processes of indexing cohesive links from clause to clause. Importantly, however, both languages have the resources to attend to each of these aspects.

However, despite these difference in the form and function of Theme at the lexicogrammatical level, the analyses above demonstrated that, at the level of semantics, both languages were able to combine the lexicogrammatical resources at their disposal in order to mark digressive rhetorical orientations and to distinguish between expanding and elaborating/embedding relations. Taking this idea together with the above, there is an important point to be made with regard to the unit of analysis in both text analysis and comparative and typological research. In the case of text analysis, even in English, we would suggest that semantic units above the clause, such as Cloran's RUs, should be the basis for any analysis of textual progression. As suggested above, Theme performs different

functions both within and between languages and any analysis that focuses on Theme alone will present a distorted picture at best. Furthermore, if the comparison is between texts from different languages (as in this paper), the analyses will diverge so far as to be incommensurate. In contrast, as shown above, the supraclausal semantic work to which textual devices including Theme are put is more likely to be language-general, with the same destination being reached through divergent but nonetheless commensurable routes. Similar comments apply to comparative and typological work and the tendency to compare the number and placement of lexicogrammatical resources such as Theme over comparable corpora in the two languages. To emphasise the point: if Theme doesn't mean the same thing in the two languages, then such a comparison is between apples and pears.

We will finish with two further points which take us back briefly to the question of universals in language. Firstly, in terms of the level of abstraction of universals, we would suggest that semantic features, such as the existence of rhetorical expansions and elaborations/embeddings, are more likely to be universal properties of language than lexicogrammatical features, though less likely than metafunctional diversity as posited by Halliday. They are therefore a useful halfway house between these two levels of abstraction and as such allow analysts a useful location for moving between the two. And secondly, in the analysis of parametric and hierarchical universals – particularly as they drift from the absolute to the statistical end of the cline – analysts might benefit from considering the overall characterologies of the languages under study and how these impact different structures and their interaction. This would allow for an explanation of the coexistence of features, rather than a simple correlation, so as to attend to the *problem of linkage* between linguistic constraints and the preferred structures in individual languages (Kirby 1999:20). Such work would be further enhanced through textual rather than clausal analysis. It would also benefit from an approach that takes on board the competing pressures implied in the metafunctional, rather than simply propositional, characterisation of language, given that markedness often plays an important role in disrupting rather than facilitating the processes of interpretation.

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¹ While Beckner *et al.* continue that “the conceptual patterns derived from the L1 shape the way that constructions are put together, leading to non-native categorization and “thinking for speaking” (Slobin 1996)”, we do not adhere to the view that conceptualisation and linguistic representation are separate concepts but rather a single act of *construal*. Nonetheless, we follow the line of reasoning that the structures of a language will affect the way a speaker construes events in ongoing text production.

² And in some cases, as with a vocative as an interpersonal Theme, to its material context.

³ Unfortunately, however, many working on languages other than English within the SFL tradition assume that the exact function of Theme is the same across languages and/or that the Theme will be the first experiential element in the clause.

⁴ According to Kristin Davidse (pers.comm.) “In fact, this ‘later’ development is closer to the older one in Halliday (1970), which I personally prefer.”

⁵ A term chosen to be neutral in terms of process and product.

⁶ *Téma* is only one of the concepts developed by Mathesius. It is introduced here as it offers a perspective that is lacking in the SFL approach, while Mathesius’s other terms have very close equivalents in SFL.

⁷ More accurately, Finite-initial.

⁸ The idea can also be related to alternative conceptions of Theme as extending beyond the first experiential element, e.g. Berry 1996.

⁹ The degree to which Gaelic may have what is classified as a Primary Syntactic Element (PSE) demonstrating a number of associated features is a question waiting to be answered.

¹⁰ As with all SFL terms the capital letter suggests that the metalanguage is designed to reflect normal usage but nonetheless has its own specific meaning in the theory.

¹¹ There are cases, however, where individual messages may show no overt relation to preceding RUs but where these are serving as preambles, fillers or such like before the text continues in a cohesive fashion.

¹² The Gaelic text is a translation by the author of her English original.

¹³ + indexes the second of two words corresponding to a single word in translation

¹⁴ Here we diverge from the standard IFG analysis in this case that the ‘it’ here is a dummy standing in for “to go shopping” as Theme.

¹⁵ The placement of the tonic stress here is either a slip from the author in reading the text or else we have to allow for the tonic to be placed on either modifier or head in the final group structure of the clause rather than the final element *per se*. While the first option is the less convincing way out, I think it is quite likely here as there is an unusual pause between the two elements and the tonic makes less sense where placed.

¹⁶ Both would be Recounts in Cloran’s 2010 under-differentiated RU schema.