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## Notes on transitivity and theme in English

### Part 3

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#### 8. TRANSITIVITY RECONSIDERED

8.1. *Transitivity and the clause.* Previous parts of this paper have been concerned with two areas in the syntax of the English clause: Part 1 with transitivity, Part 2 with theme. Transitivity is defined as relating to the experiential component of meaning (or 'cognitive', though this term is not really appropriate since all components involve a cognitive stratum); the discussion has been confined to the expression of processes and the participants therein – syntactically, those functions having in general verbal and nominal realizations – although a full treatment of the experiential component in the syntax of the clause would take account of other features, the expression of time and place and other adjuncts to and conditions on the process. Theme is related to the discoursal, or informational, component; under this heading are brought together the principal options whereby the speaker introduces structure into the discourse and (in the ideal case) ensures 'comprehension' – the recognition of the text as a text, and its interpretation along predicted lines.

The place of these two sets of options in the grammar, and their relation to each other, is considered briefly in section 10 below. While there is relative independence between them, as compared with the high degree of interdependence among the options within each set, the two cannot be entirely isolated from one another in a description of the syntax of the clause. They have often been treated rather separately, perhaps because thematic structure has often been looked upon as a kind of secondary structure imposed by the speaker for the sake of stylistic variety; and this in turn may be for various reasons. It is sometimes assumed, for example, that clauses which are agnate thematically are paraphrases of one another whereas clauses related in other ways are not; and in some languages, including English, many thematic options are realized by structural means somewhat different from those used to express the experiential meaning of the clause, for example the use of phonological prominence of the sort referred to as 'tonicity' to realize information focus. But the latter is a low-level, language-specific distinction; and the former assumption seems to depend on a consideration of the clause in isolation from any context, whereas it is in relation to the context that thematic variation is meaningful: it seems doubtful whether one could insist, for example, that // it was **yesterday** John painted **the shed** // and // the one who painted **the shed** yesterday // was **John** //, taken

in context, have the same meaning, while at the same time asserting that *John painted the shed yesterday* and *John was painting the shed yesterday*, or the modally agnate pair *John painted the shed yesterday* and *did John paint the shed yesterday?*, have not.

The description of any one component is likely to affect and to be affected by the description of the others. This has been brought out, earlier, in the discussion of unmarked theme and mood (5.1) and of theme and the passive (5.2), where it was suggested that, in different ways, both declarative / interrogative and active / passive could be more fully understood in the light of the analysis of theme and rheme in the clause. There are a number of more and less familiar instances of differences in thematic options pinpointing distinctions in transitivity, or at least suggesting that there is something to be explained; examples are scattered throughout. And the discussion of structural function in the clause, concerning such fundamental questions as the nature of the subject, presupposes an account not only of transitivity but also of theme and mood. The existence of a type of structural relation among the various components such as is envisaged here is in fact implied in certain well-known formulations, for example ‘“subject as actor” or “subject as theme”’: each component specifies a set of clause functions and these functions, when combined, constitute the elements of structure of the clause, so that for example in *John threw the ball*, *John* realizes the element Subject/Actor/Theme. Certain options determine, as their realizations, particular alignments of functions, such as the combination of theme and actor in contrast to that of theme and goal; such an option always involves the intersection of a pair of components, in this case the experiential and the discoursal. Thus any nominal is, or may be, occupying a complex of roles specified by options in more than one area, the particular alignment being specified by one of the interconnecting options, for example that of voice.

In principle any function may enter into complex elements of the kind described, and the fact that the present discussion is in general limited, as far as the experiential component is concerned, to those functions which are realized nominally does not mean that these and no others enter into combinations with functions derived from other components. Mention has already been made (5.3) of the combination of various circumstantial functions, such as those of time and place, as well as of elements having no function in transitivity at all (the modal and discourse adjuncts), with discoursal functions such as ‘theme’ and ‘new’. Once transitivity is treated as a system of the clause, or rather a set of such systems, it can be seen to be part of a wider domain extending over the whole of the experiential component of clause organization and embracing the full set of structural functions: not only actor and goal, or their equivalents, but also beneficiary, range, attribute, instrument, manner, time, place or whatever are found to be the appropriate and most useful generalizations. The question whether the term ‘transitivity’ is then used to cover the whole of this domain, or is

limited to the area of processes and participants, or even more narrowly to process, actor and goal, is a terminological one; the line between participants and circumstances is not a sharp one, and is almost certainly specific to the given language. At the same time the grammar of processes and their participants does constitute, in English, a distinct area of enquiry, the 'participant' being definable in various ways, perhaps most usefully as 'any function that can combine with that of subject' (see 10.1 below); and the problem of the basic contrasting clause types of English is one that can be discussed in terms of process and participant functions (cf. Fillmore, 1966: 8-9).

In section 1 a framework was suggested for identifying some of the various clause types that contrast in transitivity. The distinction was drawn, following the tradition of English grammars (as opposed to that of dictionaries, which have a different analysis at this point), between two types of process: action and ascription. Action included both physical and abstract processes and the various animate mental processes of perception, cognition and so on, as in *Mary washed the clothes, John threw the ball, John sold the books, the prisoners marched, the boy fell down, it rained, John saw the play, Mary spoke French*; ascription was the assigning of attributes, as in *she looked happy, it cost ten shillings*. Both action and ascription are treated in English as processes, in that they are subject to tense and modality with the same set of options in each case; they are also distinct in a number of ways, such as that in ascription there is an attribute which is obligatory. Clauses of the action type, 'extensive' clauses, were then distinguished into the two types 'effective' (directed action) and 'descriptive' (non-directed action). Thus 'effective' and 'descriptive' were features of the clause, specifying two major classes of verb, designated class 2 and class 1, but with the implication that any given verb might appear in both classes: certain types of action, in other words, might be either directed towards a goal or not so directed.

It has often been pointed out (e.g. by Curme, 1931: 437 ff.) that the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs in English is blurred, so that it seems quite natural for the distinction, if it appears in the grammar at all, to appear as an opposition of clause types like that of 'effective / descriptive' above. Such an opposition could rest on three assumptions: that a pair of structural functions 'actor' and 'goal' can be recognized, on the dimension of transitivity, such that, in *John threw the ball*, *John* is actor and *the ball* is goal; that some clauses contain both actor and goal while others contain only actor; and that in all action clauses, notwithstanding *John threw the ball* may require to be regarded as the nuclear type, these functions can be unambiguously assigned – that is, while it may be necessary to specify some particular interpretation for actor and goal in the environment of, say, a clause of perception such as *John heard a noise* there will be no doubt that *John* is actor and *a noise* goal and not the other way round. The further assumption, that there are two classes of verb, one taking a goal and thus occurring only in directed action clauses, the other not taking a goal and

thus occurring only in non-directed action clauses, would not be necessary to the distinction: it might be the case that all verbs could occur in clauses of both types. While such is not the case in English, neither would it be true that the presence or absence of a goal in the clause would be fully predictable from the verb selected; and to the extent that it is not predictable, to that extent the distinction into transitive and intransitive verbs is weaker than that into effective and descriptive clauses. The potential distinction, in other words, between verbs which are inherently goal-directed and verbs which are not, is less useful as a generalization than the actual distinction between clauses which contain a goal, or rather (an important difference) a feature of goal-directedness, and those which do not.

This being the case, however, instead of a single opposition of transitive and intransitive, we may attempt from the start to work towards a set of clause types embodying a full range of possible transitivity distinctions: to recognize, that is, a set of clause features specifying, in the form of structural functions, the various kinds of process and the participant roles that may be associated with each. Such functions are not limited to, or may even not comprise, those of actor and goal, but include other participant functions and possibly all experiential functions relevant to the syntax of the clause, since it is the total set of these which combine with the functions specified by the discoursal and modal components to form the elements of structure of the clause. The clause features would also specify verb classes, since the notion of types of process is a means of accounting for restrictions on the selection of the lexical verb; but these would not be limited to the simple extensional pair transitive and intransitive. It may need to be demonstrated, in fact, whether the inherent extension of the action, its goal-directedness or otherwise, has any relevance to transitivity, since an 'intransitive verb' may be 'used transitively' and vice versa. In the next section (8.2) it will be suggested that, while actor and goal are not irrelevant to English, the classification of processes by extension, and the corollary assumption of actor and goal as the primary structural functions in transitivity, may lead to certain difficulties of analysis and interpretation, some of which may be simplified if one is prepared to depart from a straightforward 'actor – action (– goal)' view of transitivity in the English clause.

8.2. *The ergative in English.* In an earlier paper (Halliday, 1967: 15) I suggested that the underlying form of clause organization in English, on the dimension of transitivity, might be of the ergative rather than, or at least as well as, of the transitive type: 'The basic pattern of organization in the English clause seems thus to be more readily describable not primarily in terms of action and goal but rather in terms of cause and effect. . . . These two patterns may be called respectively the "transitive" and the "ergative". In English, transitive and ergative coexist . . . but the predominant pattern is the ergative one.' Compare the intro-

duction of 'ergative' by Fillmore (1966: 4-5) in his criticism of the traditional notions of subject and object.

Reference was made in section 1 (Part 1, p. 43) to 'the questions posed by verbs such as *drive*, *change*, *cook*', and the reasoning can be stated very briefly in terms of the categories adopted there. In an actor - goal analysis, structural functions are assigned such that, in the effective *Mary turned the light on*, *Mary* is actor and *the light* is goal, while in the descriptive *the baby sat up*, *the baby* is actor and there is no goal; and the first of these, but in principle not the second, admits the thematically determined option of operative / receptive with the actor optional in the receptive form: *Mary turned the light on*, *the light was turned on (by Mary)*. The actor is optional here because, as pointed out in section 5.2 (Part 2, p. 216; and cf. Sweet, 1891: 113), the selection of receptive is partly determined by the informational status of the actor: either the actor explicitly represents new, often contrastive, information, in which case it is expressed in a prepositional form appropriate to end position in the clause and normally carries the tonic, or it is (treated by the speaker as) fully recoverable information, in which case it is omitted altogether. This gives the pattern, characteristic of a 'transitive' form of clause organization (cf. section 1, Part 1, p. 40):

Active ('operative')  
Mary turned the light on  
Ac            Go  
the baby sat up  
Ac

Passive ('receptive')  
the light was turned on (by Mary)  
Go                            (Ac)

The tendency in English, however, is for *the baby sat up* to be treated as a 'middle' form and for the paradigm to be filled out by the presence of a middle form in the effective type and of non-middle forms in the descriptive:

| Operative                | Middle              | Receptive                          |
|--------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mary turned the light on | the light turned on | the light was turned on (by Mary)  |
| Ac            Go         | Go                  | Go                            (Ac) |
| Mary sat the baby up     | the baby sat up     | the baby was sat up (by Mary)      |
| In            Ac         | Ac                  | Ac                            (In) |

These two sets of clauses are shown, in the actor - goal analysis, as differing from one another in structure (cf. Part 1, p. 43); in this representation the roles of actor and goal in the effective are matched by those of initiator and actor in the descriptive, the two being thereby shown as proportional. This is not the only way in which the difference could be represented while maintaining the proportionality, which could equally be achieved by introducing a feature 'causative' into the second set; in fact the recognition of 'effective' and 'descriptive' as distinct clause features already makes it unnecessary to represent the difference in structural

terms. But, in one way or another, two different descriptions are being given to *Mary turned the light on* and *Mary sat the baby up*, and any clause will be assigned to one type or the other; to the first would belong *John threw the ball* / *sold the books* / *steered the car* / *polished the leather* / *planted the flowers*; to the second, *John marched the prisoners* / *failed the students* / *walked the horse* / *shone the silver* / *grew the vegetables*.

This may seem quite natural, on the grounds that *Mary sat the baby up* could be paraphrased as *Mary made the baby sit up* (but see 9.1 below), whereas *Mary turned the light on* presumably could not be paraphrased as *Mary made the light turn on*. Nevertheless it raises a problem. There is a class of clauses in English exemplified by

John opened the door      the door opened      the door was opened (by John)

which display, like those above, both non-middle (operative / receptive) and middle forms, yet which are describable equally well either as initiator – actor structures or as actor – goal structures; compare *John stopped the car* / *changed the plans* / *broke the glass* / *cooked the food* / *trained the athletes*. The clause *John opened the door* can be interpreted either as ‘John did something to the door’, like *John threw the ball* or *Mary turned the light on*, or as ‘John made the door do something’, like *John marched the prisoners* or *Mary sat the baby up*. But *John opened the door* is not an ambiguous sentence; it does not want two different descriptions. The difficulty with the actor – goal analysis is that for all such clauses it imposes two descriptions, so that either an arbitrary choice is made between them or both are assigned and the clause is thus treated as ambiguous. By making it impossible for *John opened the door* to be identical both with *John threw the ball* and with *John marched the prisoners*, since these are not identical with each other, the description in terms of actor and goal fails to show that, in English, the enforcing of non-directed action is the same thing as the taking of directed action. The notions ‘John did something to the door’ and ‘John made the door do something’ are not structurally differentiated, as is suggested by the co-ordination possibilities: co-ordination is not usually possible across structural functions, whereas clauses such as *they are polishing and shining the silver*, *he grows and sells flowers*, seem quite regular. (This probably also explains why we cannot say *Mary threw John the ball* in the sense of ‘Mary made John throw the ball’.)

This generalization can be expressed, without losing sight of the difference between *John threw the ball* and *John marched the prisoners*, if an alternative analysis is adopted whereby the two are given the same structural description and the notion of two kinds of action, one goal-directed and one not, is replaced by a notion of only one kind of action with which may be associated either one or two participants. Either there is just one participant, in which case the form is middle like *the door opened*, or there are two participants, giving the operative / receptive forms *John opened the door* / *the door was opened (by John)*. A single

structural function may be generalized as common to all middle clauses, represented alike by *the baby (sat up)*, *the silver (shone)*, *the prisoners (marched)*, *the door (opened)*, *the leather (polished)*, *the light (turned on)*. This may be tentatively called the 'affected' function. In the non-middle forms, where two participants are involved, the same function may be recognized; the element having this function is that which is non-subject in the operative and subject in the receptive. In other words *the door* has the same transitivity function in all three forms *John opened the door*, *the door opened*, *the door was opened (by John)*.<sup>1</sup>

The 'affected' is obligatory, in clauses of the types so far considered, and it is the sole obligatory function. The operative / receptive forms then contain a second, optional participant whose function might be labelled, for purposes of the discussion, the 'causer': the causer is the subject in the operative and the agent in the receptive, *John* in both *John opened the door* and *the door was opened by John*. The causer is present in the operative / receptive but not in the middle form; in other words, there is an opposition of features middle / non-middle such that the non-middle is interpretable as embodying external causation, the existence of a causer that is not identical with, or at least is treated as discrete from, the affected. This applies whether or not there is a structural element 'causer' present in the clause: the receptive embodies the notion of a causer even when no agent is present, just as the operative embodies the notion of a goal (or, in the suggested analysis, of an 'affected' participant) even when no element with this function is present in the structure, as in *this machine washes clean*. Thus if the functions of actor and goal are replaced by those of affected and causer, the affected corresponds to the goal of a directed action and the actor, including enforced actor, in a non-directed action (object of a transitive and subject of an intransitive verb); the causer corresponds to the actor in directed action and the initiator, but not actor, in non-directed action (subject of a transitive verb); in terms of the subject types in section 1 (Part I, p. 46), the affected is accusative and nominative, the causer ergative. Instead of a 'transitive' form of organization, based on extension, where the question is whether the action extends beyond the actor or not, the alternative being considered is an 'ergative' form of organization, based on causation, where the question is whether the cause is external to the action or not. In the former, where the structural functions are obligatory actor and optional goal, clause types are distinguished according to whether the action is or is not goal-directed; in the latter, with obligatory 'affected' and optional 'causer', they are distinguished according to the extent to which there is a tendency for the causer of the action to be identical with the affected.

[1] Cf. Fillmore (1966: 4-5): 'It seems to me that . . . there is a semantically relevant relation between THE DOOR and OPEN that is the same in the two sentences [*the door will open* and *the janitor will open the door*], in spite of the fact that THE DOOR is the Subject of the so-called intransitive verb and the Object of the so-called transitive verb. . . . A term we might use for this function is Ergative.' It is this function for which I used – and retain here – the term 'affected'.

Thus the distinction represented by the features 'effective / descriptive' would be that between the clause type having the two-participant, non-middle (operative / receptive) form as its unmarked form, e.g. *turn on + light (+ Mary)*, *throw + ball (+ John)*, and that having the one-participant, middle form as its unmarked form, e.g. *sit up + baby*, *march + prisoners*. The former, the 'effective' type, is transitive if unmarked, reflexive if marked; the latter, the 'descriptive' type, is intransitive if unmarked, causative if marked; and these two types define certain (non-exhaustive) verb classes. At the same time there is a clause type for which neither form is marked or unmarked, exemplified by *open + door*; and this can be regarded as the nuclear clause type for English, both because it attracts members from the other types and because it neutralizes the distinction between effective and descriptive and incorporates the unmarked features of both. Thus (with marked forms in parenthesis):

|             | middle                | non-middle (operative)   |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| effective   | (the light turned on) | Mary turned the light on |
| nuclear     | the door opened       | John opened the door     |
| descriptive | the baby sat up       | (Mary sat the baby up)   |

It is not suggested that there is no validity in the actor – goal account, but rather that in English the ergative and the transitive forms of organization exist side by side. It may be that all languages contain elements of both these types, and indeed it is questionable at what level the difference between them is significant (Lyons, 1966: 228, n. 7). But it seems possible to make some generalizations relating to clause types other than those of physical action on the basis of the notion of the 'affected' (cf. 8.3 below); and some patterns seem more readily explainable in ergative than in actor – goal terms, such as the *he taught John French* referred to in section 2.2 (*John* affected, *he* causer, *French* range; cf. 9.1 below). There may also perhaps be some connexion between the ergative element in the grammar of the clause and the tendency in English whereby nominals other than those that might be thought of as the primary participants (actor and goal, or affected and causer) may enter into a structurally immediate relation with the verb. If in place of the fundamentally linear conceptualization inherent in the transitive pattern, where what is variable is the extension of the action, the clause is structured on ergative lines with the affected as the obligatory participant, there is less reason why the causer should be singled out as the only other role to be realized without the mediation of a secondary (prepositional) predication. The causer is not, in any particular sense, 'primary'; it is only one of a number of possible roles relating to the process, and other functions, notably those of beneficiary and range, are also treated structurally as participants, with direct dependence on the verb. The payoff is largely thematic: the greater flexibility of nominals in the organization of discourse. Among the various discourse systems of the clause, as discussed in sections 4–7 (Part 2), are a number in which

the full paradigmatic range of potentialities is open only to nominals: for example, only a nominal can be the unmarked theme of a declarative clause, so *she was sent some flowers* (in preference to *she was sent some flowers to*), *the time was spent in dancing*, *four boundaries were hit*. It was suggested in Part 1 that the difference between nominal and non-nominal realizations of clause functions was not entirely superficial; and the 'clustering' pattern whereby a number of transitivity functions may be directly dependent on the process seems to be related to one or two factors outside the area of transitivity itself (cf. 10.2 below).

Given that a distinction can be drawn between a type of clause having two participants in the unmarked form and one having one participant, it does not necessarily follow that the functions remain constant, the one-participant form always having affected only and the two participant form affected and causer. In section 1, the distinction was made between the middle and the process-oriented receptive, labelled types (vii) and (ix); and in the present terms the latter, being receptive, implies, as the former does not, a causer that is discrete from the affected, though with an option (having active verb) whereby the causer not only is not but cannot be specified, as opposed to the agent-oriented receptive where the causer can be specified though often is not. The distinction appears clearly in the nuclear clause type: *the door opens* may be a middle form, with no causer, as in *the door opens at seven o'clock each morning* (whether or not an external agent is required in the real world is immaterial), or it may be a process-oriented receptive, with causation though without the structural realization of a causer, interpretable as 'it is possible for somebody / something to open the door'; hence the ambiguity of *this door doesn't open in wet weather*, middle 'it stays closed', receptive 'it cannot be opened (e.g. because of the damp)'. The middle forms are unrestricted in tense and modality; the process-oriented receptive is restricted in its range of tenses and modals, is more than usually frequent in negative and is interpreted potentially (perhaps having arisen through the modal use of *will* in *will not* 'is not willing to', hence 'cannot be made to'). So *the door was opening*, *when is the door going to open?*, will not be interpreted as receptive, while *this door doesn't / won't open* may regularly be either type and, if receptive, is interpreted as 'can't be opened (by anyone)'. The same ambiguity may arise even in descriptive clauses: *the silver shines* may be middle, like *the sun shines*, or receptive 'it can be made to shine'; the appearance of the latter type in descriptive clauses, having a causative potential sense (compare the facetious *these prisoners don't march* 'cannot be made to march'), is another instance of the ergative tendency whereby the non-middle in an intransitive type comes more and more to resemble the non-middle in the transitive type. (The clearest instances are those involving suppletion: middle *the chair fell over*, process-oriented receptive *the chair knocks over (easily)*. But a set such as that formed by *fall / knock over + chair* in fact functions as the nuclear clause type; see 9.1 below.)

There is not necessarily any structural difference between the middle and the

process-oriented receptive, since the two are systemically distinct and the nominal element can be regarded as having the function 'affected' in both cases. Since one participant is not limited to one role, the participant in the middle form – where there is no external cause – could be regarded as combining the two roles of affected and causer; and this would be significant if there were ever two middle forms, for example in effective *Mary washed* (sc. 'herself'), cited as middle in section 1, and *the clothes washed*: the former would have *Mary* as causer/affected, the latter *the clothes* as affected only. There is certainly a difference, since *Mary* and *the clothes* cannot be co-ordinated here (cf. agent and instrument, in Fillmore, 1966: 7, n. 5); and although it is not usually distinguished from a process-oriented receptive, both being what Sweet (1891: 90) called 'passival', it seems that there is perhaps in effective clauses a form like *the clothes washed* which is middle (cf. *the books sold*, *the light turned on*). Such a form would resemble the middle in the nuclear type and would probably be further favoured by the occurrence in descriptive (middle) of clauses like *John fell down* (referred to as 'unintentional' in 3.3; cf. 9.1 below) as distinct from the type of *John sat down*.

This distinction could be accounted for in the same way, by postulating *John* as causer/affected in *John sat down* and affected only in *John fell down*; and some of the former type would resemble the corresponding items in the effective in having an explicitly reflexive variant *he sat himself down*, like *Mary washed herself*, with the *-self* form in both cases phonologically weak unless contrastive. Thus *Mary washed* (sc. 'herself') would be paired with *John sat down* and *the clothes washed* with *John fell down*. But the distinction in descriptive clauses is one of action type rather than participant role, being in general associated, in spite of a few instances like *he sat down with a bump* (= 'fell into a sitting position'), with the selection of different verbs; whereas in the effective the difference between the two middle forms reflects the likely functioning of the nominals concerned in the non-middle form. We may postulate some feature distinction, perhaps that of action, or 'doing', as opposed to supervention, or 'happening' (see 9.1 below), as common to both, which in effective but not in descriptive specifies a difference in structure.

None of the middle clauses, however, has two interpretations, so that although the distinction between *Mary washed* and *the clothes washed* is not one of process type it is one of type of process – participant relation; and it is this that can be represented in terms of actor and goal, the one being an actor – action relation and the other a goal – action relation. Rather than regarding *Mary* as combining two ergative functions it may be more helpful to consider that *Mary* is actor/affected whereas *the clothes* is goal/affected. This would be an aspect of what seems to be the general relation between the ergative and the transitive patterns in the clause. The transitive functions are fundamentally those of action clauses, specifying the role of a participant in relation to the type of action; whereas the

ergative functions seem to be common to all types of process and, in fact, to all clause types, including relations and mental processes (8.3 below). The ergative, in other words, represents the more general form of organization of the clause into processes and participants, underlying the voice system (middle / non-middle) and the principal clause types. The development of the nuclear clause type, with its neutralization of the two types of action and thus of the actor / goal distinction, shows perhaps the tendency to restructure the actor – goal processes in ergative terms, whereas the effective and descriptive embody the transitive pattern in an unadulterated form.<sup>2</sup>

A particular type of middle clause is the reflexive, and this at first sight does seem to have two interpretations since // the children are washing **themselves** // may mean either 'no-one else is washing them' or 'they are not washing anyone else'. But this is hardly a syntactic ambiguity; the focally unmarked form // . . . **washing** themselves // (section 4.4, Part 2, p. 206) has only one interpretation, and resembles the simple middle form *the children are washing*. (Hence the two response questions based on its non-middle interpretation, *what are they washing?* and *who's washing them?*, can both be countered by the one reflexive form with marked focus – it is a characteristic of middle clauses that such questions are answerable but, as the answer shows, irrelevant.) The clause *the children are washing themselves* might be thought of as a two-participant, operative form with causer and affected; but no receptive form *the children are being washed by themselves* exists, and this, together with the existence of the 'doing' / 'happening' feature distinction referred to above, suggests that it is rather a middle clause with affected participant only. The reflexive pronoun would thus have no separate function, though there might perhaps be a transitive structure with actor and goal (in which case // the children are washing **themselves** // could be shown to be ambiguous, having actor – goal when countering *what are they washing?* and goal – actor when countering *who's washing them?*, with marked focus falling on the contrasting function in each case). The 'true' (middle) reflexives differ both from clauses having the reflexive pronoun in other functions, such as beneficiary (*cut yourself a slice of cake*) and attribute (*he seems himself again*), and also from a kind of 'pseudo-reflexive' where the *-self* pronoun is a separate element in a non-middle structure, hence contrasting regularly with other nominals and carrying the unmarked tonic, and the clause has a receptive equivalent: thus // he fought **himself** // , // he was supervised by **himself** // – there is no form // he fought himself //, // he supervised himself // (and cf. // please **yourself** // ). The middle form in the voice system thus incorporates an option whereby reflexivity may or may not be overtly expressed, its availability and interpretation being determined by the clause type.

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[2] As Fillmore shows (1966: 5), even in action clauses the causer is not necessarily an actor; it may be an instrument, as in *the key opened the door*.

8.3. *Other clause types.* The interpretation of the structure of action clauses in terms of an ergative pattern suggests some tentative observations concerning other clause types. In the discussion of clauses with *be* (sections 3.2, 6.1) the distinction was drawn between the 'intensive', where the process is ascription, the assigning of an attribute, and the equative, which was treated as a type of effective clause with the process being syntactically one of action rather than ascription. The intensive clause, like *Mary is / seems happy*, *Mary was / became a teacher*, is a non-reversible, one-participant type with the verb being of the copulative class ('class o': *be, become, seem, look, sound, get, turn, &c.*); the equative, like *John is the leader*, is a reversible, two-participant type with the verb being of the equative sub-class (of 'class 2': *be, equal, resemble, realize, represent, &c.*).

In an intensive clause, such as *Mary is a teacher*, the complement has the transitivity function of 'attribute' and the subject is an 'attribuand': the only role of *Mary* here is as the carrier of an attribute. This role of attribuand is accountable for simply as that of 'affected' in the special environment of the feature 'intensive': where the process is ascription, the affected is the participant to which the attribute is ascribed. This relates to the fact that in all other clause types it is only the affected (referred to above as the 'pivotal' participant: see 3.1, Part 1, p. 63) that can be simultaneously the carrier of an attribute: in *he fell senseless*, *he* is the affected, but in *they knocked him senseless*, *they* is causer and so cannot be the domain of an attribute – hence the latter is not ambiguous in spite of having two participants. The intensives also occur in non-middle form (section 3.4), the 'attributor' being the causer, as in *she made him happy*. The distinctive feature of the intensive is that the attribute is obligatory: contrast *Mary is happy* with *Mary sat still*, the latter being a descriptive clause with the attribute optional.

Unlike the intensive, the equative relates an 'identifier' to a 'thing to be identified', as in ('which is John?') // *John is the leader* //. This relates to the underlying WH- question, and either identified or identifier may come first in sequence. The occurrence of an indefinite nominal as complement in the intensive and a definite in the equative is not accidental, but neither is it obligatory. Ascription is an inclusion relation, equation a relation of identity, so that there is an unmarked association of indefiniteness with an attribute and definiteness with an identifier. But identity may be merely the limiting case of inclusion, so that an attribute may be definite as in *Mary looks the prettiest*, *John became the leader* (and cf. *Olivier was Hamlet* as intensive, in 3.2, Part 1, p. 70, n. 6); while on the other hand the identity relation may obtain even with an indefinite entity, as in ('why mention Gladstone?') // *Gladstone would be an example* //.

The equative, it was suggested, has two interpretations, as decoding and as encoding: // *John is the leader* // as a decoding equative has the interpretation 'John realizes, has the function of the leader', with *John* as variable and *the leader* as value, and as an encoding equative has the interpretation 'John is realized by, has the form of the leader', with *John* as value and *the leader* as variable. All

equative clauses are therefore ambiguous: for example // the noisiest ones are **the freshmen** //, decoding ‘you notice those noisiest ones there? well they’re freshmen’, encoding ‘you want to know who makes the most noise? the freshmen do’; // what they’re selling might be **sports clothes** //, decoding ‘what are those things they’re selling? they might be sports clothes’, encoding ‘what do they sell? they might sell sports clothes’. Of the two types the decoding is nearer to the intensive, being intermediate between this and the encoding type; ascription is itself a form of decoding relation:

|           |          |                                              |
|-----------|----------|----------------------------------------------|
| intensive | decoding | { Mary is a teacher / is happy               |
| equative  | {        | John (variable) is <b>the leader</b> (value) |
|           |          | John (value) is <b>the leader</b> (variable) |

The reversibility of equatives was regarded as a type of voice (operative / receptive) opposition, but with the sequence depending on the coding: if the relation is a decoding one the operative is // John is **the leader** //, like *Mary is a teacher*, the receptive (which is rare) // **the leader** is John //; if encoding, the operative is // **the leader** is John //, receptive // John is **the leader** //. This is brought out by examples involving person concord:

|          |              |                                     |                                     |
|----------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|          |              | operative                           | receptive                           |
| decoding | which am I?  | you’re <b>the tall one</b><br>Su/Vr | <b>the tall one</b> is you<br>Su/Vl |
| encoding | which is me? | <b>the tall one</b> is you<br>Su/Vr | you’re <b>the tall one</b><br>Su/Vl |

The functions ‘value’ and ‘variable’ were then explained in terms of actor and goal: ‘variable’ equals ‘actor’ and ‘value’ equals ‘goal’ in the environment of the equative clause type. This interpretation, which emphasized the directional nature of the coding relation, rested on the consideration that the variable, like the actor, is (subject and) unmarked theme of an operative clause.

The equative clause can thus be regarded as displaying two simultaneous structures, identified – identifier and value – variable. A decoding equative is one in which the identifier is more abstract than (is realized by) the identified; an encoding equative is one in which the identifier is less abstract than (is a realization of) the identified. The identifying component shows the relationship to the ergative structure. The two meanings of *be*, as encoding and as decoding, form a pair like *please* and *like*: encoding operative *x is y* ‘identifies by realizing’ (*pleases*), receptive *y is x* ‘is identified by being realized by’ (*is pleased by*); decoding, operative *y is x* ‘is identified by realizing’ (*likes*), receptive (rare) *x is y* ‘identifies by being realized by’ (*is liked by*). Such pairs are, in fact, related as are the non-middle / middle pairs formed by such verbs as *open* (‘transitive’) and *open* (‘intransitive’), with *y* being the ‘affected’ participant. The nuclear clause

type arises from the occurrence of these two forms in the same verb, or in two verbs in suppletive relation; if only one form existed the clause would be either effective (if non-middle) or descriptive (if middle), so the encoding equative is of the effective type, with  $x$  as causer. The decoding equative resembles the descriptive, however, and here  $x$  is not causer, just as *the play* is not causer in *John liked the play* (see below). Hence the 'receptive' decoding form  $x$  is  $y$  'identified by being realized by' is, like  $x$  is liked by  $y$ , very rare, and may even be rejected; while the encoding shows both forms as entirely regular, with the sort of thematically determined variation that is associated with operative / receptive in the two-participant clause types. If we retain the analogy between variable / value and actor / goal, showing the intensive as a basically decoding relation, the pattern is as represented below:

|                      |                                                                  |                                                 |                                            |                                                                                              |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| equative<br>encoding | operative<br><b>the tall one</b><br>cf. Ir=Ca; Vr=Ac<br>the play | (identifies<br>by<br>realizing)<br>pleased      | John<br>Id=Af; Vl=Go<br>John               | receptive<br>John is <b>the tall one</b><br>(('is been by'))<br>John was pleased by the play |
| equative decoding    | cf. middle<br>John<br>Id=Af; Vr=Ac<br>John                       | (is identi-<br>fiable as<br>realizing)<br>liked | <b>the leader</b><br>Ir; Vl=Go<br>the play | / (the leader is John)<br>(the play was liked by John)                                       |
| intensive (decoding) | Mary<br>Af (Vr=Ac)                                               | (is included<br>among those<br>realizing)       | happy / a teacher<br>At (Vl=Go)            |                                                                                              |

The equative relation is thus an asymmetric and irreflexive one, meaning either 'realizes' or 'is realized by' and resembling therefore the 'equals' of  $x = 2$  rather than that of  $2 + 2 = 4$ . The equative structure, with the 'process' as simply the relating of different levels of abstraction, is a highly coded form of communication; and it has been described above (section 6) how it is exploited in the language for discursial purposes, in such a way that to any clause are systemically related at least three 'identifying' equivalents, and in the majority of cases many more, in which through the structural device of nominalization the elements of the clause are distributed into two parts, one serving to identify the other (6.1, Part 2, pp. 224-5). Identifying clauses are always encoding, so that a clause such as *the things they sell are bargains*, meaning 'the things they sell are good value', is not an identifying clause – it is a decoding equative that happens to have a nominalization in it; and the incongruence of *they sell bargains*, which is a kind of syntactic back-formation from it (as if it was an identifying clause),

lies in its having affected = actor instead of affected = goal: in its features it is a descriptive, not an effective clause. Compare *he writes great poetry* 'what he writes is great poetry', or 'the poetry he writes is great'.

There is a sense, then, in which the encoding equative belongs to the 'most transitive' clause type, in that two participants are obligatory in it and it has no middle form. At the same time it is closely related, through the decoding equative, to the intensive, in which the affected participant is merely the bearer of an attribute and which represents, in its relation to the descriptive, the 'most intransitive' type. The logical similarity between inclusion and realization is reflected in the syntactic similarity that both may be expressed by the verb *be*, even though the other members of the two verb classes do not coincide. In these clauses, where the process is simply a relation of this kind, the structural functions of the participants might appear less differentiated; but there are specific functions recognizable and these may in turn be related to generalized functions on the transitivity dimension.

Aside from clauses having no participants at all (and therefore no 'affected'), such as meteorological clauses, the one major type of clause still left out of account is the clause of mental process, expressing consciousness in its various projections. This is one which typically makes up anything up to three-quarters of all occurrences in informal conversation among educated adults, and there are four principal sub-types: reaction, perception, cognition and verbalization, exemplified by *he liked the play*, *he heard a noise*, *he believed the story*, *he said he was coming*.

An analysis in terms of actor and goal of pairs of clauses such as those with *like* and *please* would be likely to show the 'processer' as having different functions in the two cases and to suggest that the active / passive pairs are proportional:

|                            |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| everybody liked the play   | the play was liked (by everybody)   |
| the play pleased everybody | everybody was pleased (by the play) |
| Ac                      Go | Go                      (Ac)        |

But this does not account for the restricted occurrence of the receptive in the first pair (note especially the improbability of *(the one) the play was liked by (was) John*) as contrasted with its acceptability in the second (cf. *what everybody was pleased by was the play*); for the existence of a process-oriented receptive form in the one case but not in the other (*John doesn't please easily* but not *the play doesn't like easily*); or the difference in substitution (*the play pleased everybody*; *the concert did the same* but not *John liked the play*; *Mary did the same*). In ergative terms *everybody* would have the function 'affected' in all four examples; but, as already noted, the role of *the play* differs in the two pairs. Specifically, *the play* represents the phenomenon that is 'processed'; with *please* it may be regarded as a causer but with *like* it functions as defining the scope of the reaction and is not unlike the range (2.2 above): *like* appears, for example, to co-ordinate more readily

in a process – range structure than in an action – goal structure (*he neither likes nor plays tennis* but hardly *he neither likes nor invites John*). If *everybody* is affected in both cases, *the play* being (phenomenon as) causer with *please* and (phenomenon as) range with *like*, this would explain the infrequency of the agentive form *the play was liked by John*, since the agent here is not a causer but an affected (cf. the infrequency of *tennis is played by John*) and the impossibility of the process-oriented receptive form with *like*.

One feature distinguishes the phenomenon, whether as causer or as range, from all other functions in the clause: its ability to take the form not only of a ‘thing’ (a phenomenon of experience) but also of a ‘meta-thing’ – a fact, or a report. This is the ambiguity of *what she kept in the closet surprised him*: it may be interpreted as a relative, a ‘thing’ nominalization, like *what he was sitting on collapsed*, or as indirect, a ‘fact’ nominalization, like *what he knew impressed them*. (The ambiguity is not resolved by the use of the analytic form *the thing/man* / &c. *that*, since this occurs in both senses: *I know the man who did it* can mean ‘I know the answer to the question “who did it?”’.) There is an important thematic distinction between the two: with a ‘thing’, whether nominalized or not, the unmarked form is the non-substitute one *what she kept in the closet surprised him*, while with fact or report the unmarked form is *it surprised him what she kept in the closet*, although in both cases the other form occurs as a marked option (7.2 above; cf. Fillmore, 1966: 16, n. 11).

In clauses of mental process there is one participant, animate, which ‘processes’ – perceives, reacts, &c. – and which functions as affected whether the clause is of the type *John believed the story* or of the type *the story convinced John*. The other participant is that which is processed, the phenomenon; and it incorporates this additional option, of being phenomenon or metaphenomenon. It may be a phenomenon of experience, like other participants in all clause types: object, person, abstraction, quality, state, event, relation; and as such it may or may not be nominalized, so that in *he liked Mary* / *music* / *playing the piano* / *what he saw* the phenomena are all ‘things’ in this sense. Or it may be a fact or report, and these are restricted to this type of clause. So, for example,

|                                                          |          |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| he saw (watched) John / the fight / John fight(ing) Bill | (thing)  |
| he saw (took in) that John was fighting Bill             | (fact)   |
| he saw (read) that John had been fighting Bill           | (report) |

where *the fact* could be substituted, or inserted, in the second and *the report* in the third. The same verb may not necessarily occur in all three, and in some environments, perhaps in clauses of the reaction type, there may be no distinction between fact and report; in general, however, this distinction is a significant one. A report has a quoted (direct speech) equivalent, whereas a fact has not; a fact can take on all the potentialities open to nominals in the theme systems, whereas a report is more restricted – it cannot be thematically predicated (7.1 above),

nor can it be subject in a receptive clause with agent. Thus, for example, we may have *it was that they were late that he regretted* but not *it was that they were late that he said*. There are grounds for distinguishing the two structurally, a fact being embedded and a report not. Facts and reports are linguistically processed phenomena, with language itself here operating as a participant in the transitivity structure: fact is language processed at the semantic level, as information, while report is language processed at the lexicogrammatical, or syntactic, level, as text.

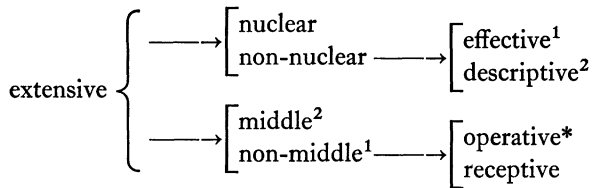
In most mental process clauses the phenomenon is obligatory, though there is the type exemplified by *he smiled* / *looked* / *pondered* / *spoke* where it is not; compare also receptives such as *he was pleased* / *amazed* / *convinced*. Possibly the mental process clauses, by defining an affected participant that is neither actor nor goal, have contributed to the development of the ergative element in the grammar. The replacement of the *it likes me* construction by one of the *I like* type suggests a change in structural function: *I run*, with *I* as actor, is not a good model for *I like*, but the function 'affected' is quite appropriate in both cases, both to *I* in *I run* and to *I* in *I like*.

The 'affected' function thus makes it possible to generalize from among several more specific transitivity functions: actor in non-directed action, goal in directed action, processer in mental process, attribuant in ascription and 'thing to be identified' in equation. It is an obligatory participant everywhere except where there is no participant at all, as in *it's raining*. Optionally, external causation is expressed by a causer, the actor in directed action and initiator in non-directed action; other optional functions, also entering potentially into a structurally immediate relation with the process, are those of beneficiary and range. The presence of any of the optional participants in the clause entails a further option of operative / receptive, since where there are two or more participants any one of them may be selected as subject and thus as unmarked theme; but there is an ordering in the degree of thematic 'markedness' such that in any clause containing a set of two or more participant functions the most unmarked form is that having the causer as subject, then that with the beneficiary as subject, then that with the affected and finally (and very restrictedly) that with the range. Among the various clause types which specify the occurrence of the various functions and their interpretation, the nuclear type is that which has in its regular paradigm, as unmarked forms, both a two-participant form, with causer and affected, and a one-participant form with affected only.

## 9. SOME SYSTEMS OF TRANSITIVITY AND THEME

9.1. *Transitivity clause types*. The recognition of the nuclear clause type, and of non-middle or middle (plus or minus causer) as the primary distinction in the voice system, yields these options within the general category of action clauses: nuclear / non-nuclear; if non-nuclear, effective / descriptive; non-middle / middle; if non-middle, operative (unmarked) or receptive; either effective

non-middle or descriptive middle being the unmarked combinations. Diagrammatically (cf. the diagram in section 1, Part 1, p. 47), where \* = 'unmarked (except as shown)' and  $i \dots i$  = 'in unmarked association':



The thematic system of identification serves as a guide to the specification of systems of clause types, by reference to the preferred form taken by the related identifying clause having just the verb as identifier; we can distinguish a 'happen' type, a 'do' type and a 'make' type:

*sell + book*

middle: what happened to the books was that they sold

non-middle: what John did to the books was sell them

*open + door*

what the door did was open

what John did to the door was open it

*march + prisoner*

middle: what the prisoners did was march

non-middle: what John made the prisoners do was march (but see below)

The 'do' type represents unmarked voice, middle in *march + prisoner*, non-middle in *sell + book*, both in *open + door*.

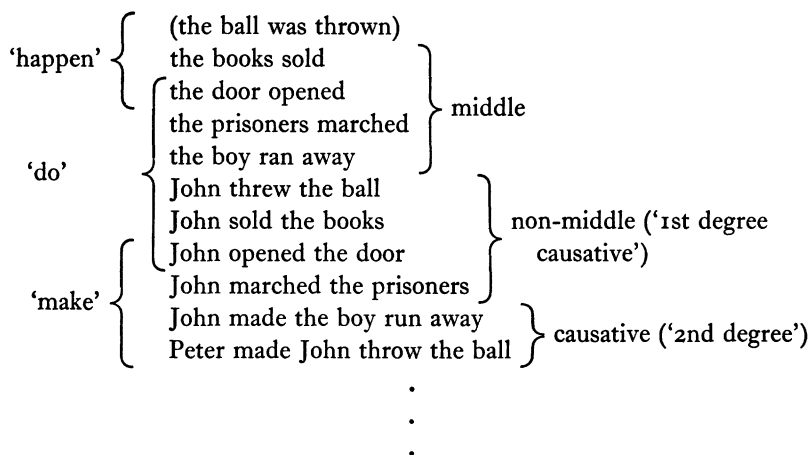
The distinctions are not sharp, and many instances cannot be clearly assigned, either because they represent a 'create' type in which the affected is brought into being by the process (e.g. *he wrote a letter*), where the verb cannot stand alone as identifier, or because they lie on the borderline between two types: there seems to be continuous variation of the 'serial relationship' kind between a 'most effective' and a 'most descriptive' type. Nevertheless it may be useful to set up five types as collectively choice-exhausting (cf. 8.3 above): the three above, together with two 'outer' types in which only the middle or only the non-middle occurs. Here again the identification system is suggestive: the fact that *throw + ball* has no middle identifying form at all, neither *what the ball did was throw* nor *what happened to the ball was that it threw* being possible, suggests that *the ball throws* could occur only as a process-oriented receptive; this therefore is an 'outer' type in which two participants are obligatory – there will always be causation even if no causer is expressed. By contrast *the books sold*, where *sell* can be isolated thematically but is substituted by *happen* rather than by *do*, is a true one-participant form but one that is 'marked' by reference to the two-participant form substituted by *do*: here the feature of causation is not obligatory but is present in

the unmarked case. A parallel distinction appears in the descriptive: in *march* + *prisoner* the identifying clause shows the middle as the 'do' form, while the non-middle requires a causative with *make*; the middle is thus unmarked. With *run away* + *boy* there is no non-middle form; this is the 'outer' type of the descriptive in which there is no possibility of two participants, and causation can only be expressed analytically in any case, as in (*what*) *John made the boy (do was) run away*. In *open* + *door* both middle and non-middle would be likely to appear in the identifying clause as 'do' forms; this is the nuclear type, in which neither the one-participant form nor the two-participant form stands in unmarked relation to the other.

The status of certain clauses is determined by their being complementary to each other as a result of verbal suppletion. Taken by itself *learn* is like *run away*: it does not occur in middle form (at least not in most standard varieties of English; for a discussion of 'this hermaphroditical use of the same word' when 'to *learn* imparts also to *teach*' see Pegge, 1814: 142 ff.). But if there is a proportion *the boy learnt* : *John taught the boy* = *the door opened* : *John opened the door*, then *teach/learn* + *boy* forms a single paradigm, like *please/like* (cf. 8.3 above); and it belongs to the nuclear type, since both *John taught the boy* and *the boy learnt* are unmarked in voice. The verb is *learn* in middle voice and *teach* in non-middle, so that *the boy learns easily* is middle while *the boy teaches easily* is process-oriented receptive.

The suppletive relation is usually not an absolute one; the overlap is incomplete. The identity of *teach* and *learn*, for example, does not cover the sense of *teach* as 'stand in the social relationship of teacher – pupil to'; compare other pairs such as *send/go*, *feed/eat*, *knock over* / *fall over* (in the divergent cognate forms *lay/lie*, *set/sit*, the proportion no longer holds at all, hence the occurrence of *lie him down*, *sit him up*). On the other hand this imperfectness of fit between middle and non-middle is not confined to suppletive forms; it may arise even when the same verb occurs throughout the paradigm (e.g. *wear*; compare the doubts regarding *keep* in 3.4 above, Part 1, p. 75).

Yet *did he learn or was he taught?* is a meaningful question; and this is not due to the lack of overlap between *learn* and *teach*. The suppletive relation does not preclude a question of this kind, because the voice system itself does not preclude it; it is a closed system question, like *did it open or was it opened?* The proportionality of *teach*:*learn* = *open* (non-middle):*open* (middle) does not imply that *teach* = 'make learn'; or rather, since 'make learn' may be acceptable as a gloss to *teach*, it does not imply that *teach* (*the boy*) is synonymous with *make* (*the boy*) *learn*. In fact both *she didn't teach him but she made him learn* and *he didn't open it but he made it open* are meaningful. While there is a clear historical connexion between transitive and causative (cf., for example, Curme, 1931: 441–2), and the ergative pattern emphasizes the causal element in transitivity, as further brought out by a series such as



where the non-middle is made to appear as a kind of 'causative of first degree', yet there is a difference in meaning between the non-middle and the causative proper, which is shown up in their interaction with the 'inherent voice' of the process.

Certain middle clauses which are clearly descriptive nevertheless seem to demand *happen* rather than *do* in the identifying form: thus *the boy fell down* resembles *the books sold* rather than *the prisoners marched* in that it suggests *what happened to the boy . . .* and not *what the boy did . . .* (cf. *John sat down*; *Mary did the same* but *John fell down*; *the same happened to Mary*). These are the 'inherently passive' verbs in which the meaning is something like 'action not engendered by the participant but supervening; generally, involuntary if animate, aided if inanimate'. In *John fell down*, as in *the books sold*, the voice relation between affected and process is one of supervention, not of action; in the latter this is a feature of the process – participant complex, while in the former it is inherent in the process itself. The causative with *make* differs from the 'first degree causative' (non-middle) in this respect, that the *make* form does not alter the inherent voice of the process – affected relation. Since *the boy sat down* is a 'doing' type, in *John made the boy sit down* the relation *sit down* + *boy* is still a doing relation. In the non-middle form, on the other hand, the process – affected relation is always one of supervention whatever the action type. Hence *John marched the prisoners* is not synonymous with *John made the prisoners march* (cf. the receptive *the prisoners were marched* / *made to march* – the identifying form cited at the beginning of this section is thus not entirely appropriate): in the *make* form the *march* + *prisoner* relation is one of 'doing', whereas in the non-middle it is one of 'happening', which accounts for the fact that we can say *hunger made the prisoners march* but not *hunger marched the prisoners*. Compare *he made the prisoners march efficiently* and *he marched the prisoners efficiently*. But where the process – affected

relation is inherently one of 'happening' the non-middle form, if it exists, will be synonymous with the analytic causative: *the rope tripped the boy up* / *made the boy trip up*.

So the fact that *teach* is not synonymous with *make* . . . *learn* does not mean that it is not related to *learn* as non-middle to middle, since *march* . . . and *make* . . . *march*, *sit* . . . *down* and *make* . . . *sit down* are also not synonymous. The implication is merely that *learn*, like *march* and *sit up*, is a 'doing' not a 'happening' verb. There are probably also suppletive pairs of the 'happening' type, such as *knock over* / *fall over* and perhaps *kill/die*, where except for lack of overlap the causative and the non-middle will be synonymous, as with *trip up*. Thus the proportions are:

the boy learnt : John taught the boy : John made the boy learn =

the prisoners marched : John marched the prisoners : John made the prisoners  
march

the chair fell over : John knocked the chair over / made the chair fall over =

the boy tripped up : John tripped the boy up / made the boy trip up

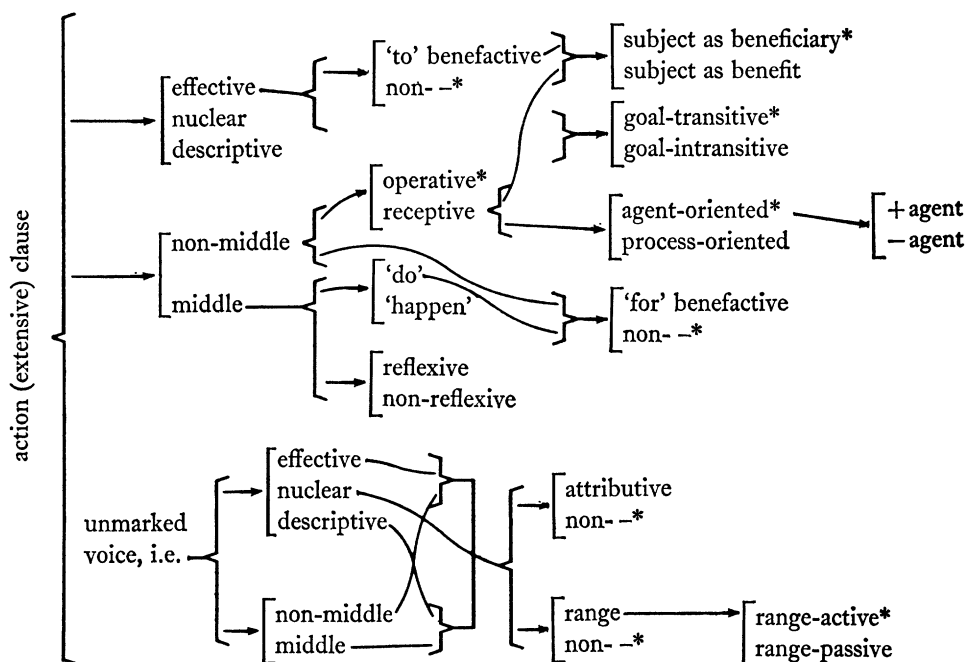
Thus while supervision, or 'happening', is a voice feature, a property of the relation between process and affected whenever a causer is present, it is also an inherent feature of certain processes (e.g. *fall down*, *trip up*, *faint*, *fail*) where even the unmarked (descriptive) middle is a 'happening' form. The affected participant in such clauses is, in actor – goal terms, actor but not initiator, like *the prisoners* in *he marched the prisoners*. In the nuclear clause type – whether or not it actually neutralizes the distinction between action and supervision – most processes seem to be interpreted as 'doing', whether the affected is animate or inanimate (a distinction which is not very clear in action clauses in any case, unlike clauses of mental process): like *the recruits* in *the recruits trained*, linguistically *the door* in *the door opened* is an unaided participant. But the opposition does appear in the effective in certain middle, including reflexive, clauses as a function of the participant type (8.3 above): *Mary washed* (sc. 'herself') is a 'doing' form, *the clothes washed*, like *the books sold*, is a 'happening' one. Likewise there are actions regarded linguistically as actions that a human participant would not voluntarily perform on himself, and which therefore become supervision in the reflexive unless overridden by some such locution as *deliberately*, e.g. *he cut himself* (cf. 3.3, Part 1, pp. 72–4). The distinction, in the process – affected relation, between clauses of 'doing' and clauses of 'happening' can thus be generalized as a voice feature, with 'happening' being an automatic property of the non-middle form; where the option occurs in the middle form it determines the class of verb in descriptive clauses, and in effective, in interaction with the reflexive option, the class of noun functioning as affected. This gives a system of 'action / supervision', dependent on middle and with supervision as the unmarked term. (Alternatively, if the nuclear type is always 'doing', the option depends on the intersection

of middle and non-nuclear and has supervention as the unmarked term except in respect of middle, where the unmarked term is action.)

Two further features both of which are associated in one way or another with voice and type of process are those of benefactive and range, discussed in section 2. The 'to' type of beneficiary, that referred to by Jespersen as the 'recipient', may occur in conjunction with certain types of process – affected complex in effective clauses; the recipient is a person, object, abstraction or institution (not a place; *he sent London the books* = 'the London office') and the process is of the 'disposal' type where the identifying form has *do with* (rather than *do to*). In the identifying form, the verb cannot be isolated from the recipient; hence to this interpretation of the ambiguous *the agent sold John the house* corresponds *what the agent did with the house was sell it to John* (not *what the agent did to John . . .*). A benefactive clause of this type has in its structure a benefit, functioning as affected; a causer (in unmarked voice); and a beneficiary (recipient); by a further option within receptive voice either the beneficiary or the affected may function as subject, and if the latter the beneficiary is usually realized prepositionally with *to* – so that here, as also in operative clauses, the distinction between *John* and *to John* is a thematic one (see 10.2 below). The 'to' benefactive also combines with some clauses of the mental process type (e.g. with *tell*), which are descriptive middle, with the 'processer' as affected and reported speech, or a noun of the 'report' class, as range; the two are blended in one sense of *promise* 'verbalize (to . . .) an offer (to . . .)'. These however are not sharply distinct from the 'for' type of benefactive as in *write John a letter, sing John a song*. In this type the verb can appear in isolation in the identifying clause and is represented by *do for*: *what the agent did (with the house) for John was sell it*. Any non-middle clause, and any middle clause of the 'doing' type – that is, any clause having an 'active' participant, a causer or a 'doer' (but not, e.g., *the boy fell down*) – will accept the 'for' type of benefactive with the beneficiary realized prepositionally; but the non-prepositional form occurs only restrictedly and in unmarked voice: in some non-middle clauses, particularly of the 'creating' type and where the affected is inanimate, which if receptive can have only the beneficiary as subject (e.g. the text example *has the cat been poured the milk yet?*); and some descriptive middle clauses provided there is also a 'range' element, as *she sang John a song (what she did for John . . .)*. The distinction between the two types is seen in the bracketing in the identifying clause rather than in the preposition selected, which may vary: *she played John a trick, wrote John a letter* are both the non-recipient ('for') type (hence *the letter was sent John* but not *the letter was written John*), while *she left John the major portion* is the recipient ('to') type.

The feature of range may combine with certain nuclear and non-nuclear clause types, again only in unmarked voice: effective non-middle *she struck him a blow*, descriptive middle *he played tennis*, nuclear (both) *she taught him / he learnt French*. In the middle form there is a further, voice-type option whereby the

clause may be 'range-active' or 'range-passive', the latter having range as subject and being very rare with agent though regular in the 'agentless' form *French is taught, blows were struck*. The information focus does not fall on the process even when this occurs as clause-final, so that process and range together form a single informational constituent; the limiting case of this being the type in which the process is expressed in the range element and the verb is merely a carrier, exemplified by *make + mistake* (2.2 above, Part I, p. 60): // **mistakes** were made //. Again, in the identifying clause the verb cannot be isolated from the range:



*what he did was play tennis* (not *what he did to tennis was play it!*) / *teach French / sing a song*. But a number of rather distinct relations are in fact subsumed here under the feature 'range'.

A provisional simplified representation of some of the options available in action clauses might then be as above.

The systems referred to above are systems of clauses of the action type, deriving from the feature labelled 'extensive' in section 1. Such clauses have been distinguished, in the previous discussion, from clauses of ascription ('intensive' clauses) and, latterly, from clauses of mental process. However, many of these other types can be accounted for as displaying the same features as are associated with action clauses. If instead of 'intensive' a more general feature 'relational' is postulated as a third process type contrasting with action and mental process,

this can be extended to cover also the equative clause. The equative can be regarded as a relation clause in non-middle voice, yielding, as elsewhere, the thematically controlled option of operative / receptive. Since there is no middle form the equative would belong to the 'outer' effective type; however, if encoding *be* and decoding *be* do in fact form a pair related to each other as transitive to intransitive (non-middle to middle) the two together would make up a nuclear paradigm having the decoding clause as a middle form. The identifier in the decoding clause would then be functioning as an element of the 'range' type, like the phenomenon in a mental process clause with *like*. Equatives with verbs other than *be*, which seem all to be of the decoding type, would likewise be middle in voice with identifier as range; but descriptive, not nuclear, since they have no equivalent non-middle (encoding) forms.

Clauses of ascription, which in Part I were treated as a distinct type on the grounds that their participant had apparently no role in transitivity, and that they contained an obligatory attribute, may be accounted for, given the notion of an 'affected' participant, within the same category of relational clauses. Clauses of this type are descriptive and have middle as the unmarked voice; they do occur however in non-middle form, this being the only instance of marked voice anywhere other than in action clauses; and the non-middle when it does occur, either with the same verb (e.g. *get*, *turn*, *keep*) or by suppletion (e.g. *she made John happy*, *John was / became happy*), is typically causative in interpretation; compare, again, the identifying form, *what John made the boy do was keep quiet*. Ascriptive clauses automatically carry the feature 'attributive', embodying the further option of depictive / resultative (cf. section 3); the function 'attribute' here is in complementary distribution with that of identifier in equative clauses, the two together being the predicative complement ('non-object complement'),<sup>3</sup> but various reasons have been given for considering them as distinct, and while the identifier can the attribute cannot be readily identified with other functions in the clause.

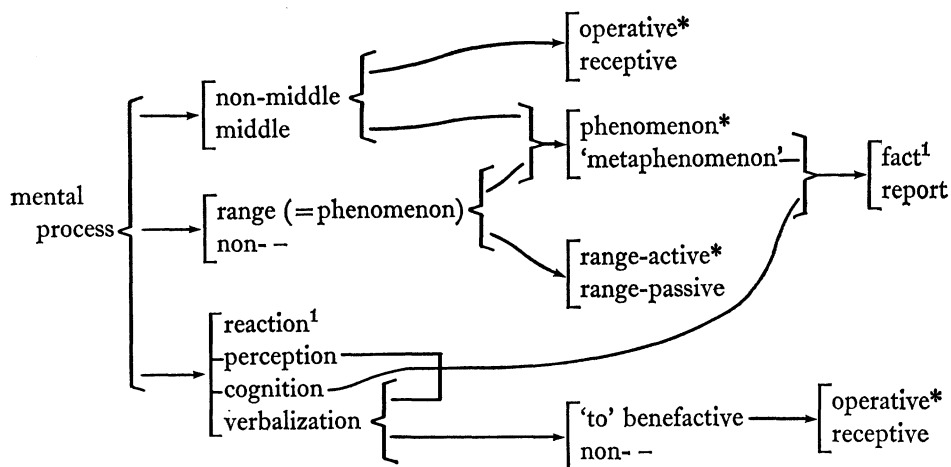
Intensive and equative clauses may thus be grouped together as 'relational and share the features of other clauses as follows:

- (1) intensive (ascription): middle or non-middle, descriptive; attributive, depictive or resultative
- (2) equative (a) decoding: middle, nuclear (*be*) or descriptive (others); range, range-active or range-passive
- (b) encoding: non-middle, nuclear, operative or receptive

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[3] The term 'complement' has been used throughout to refer to nominal elements in the 'residual constituent' (see 10.1 below); it is thus defined modally, like the subject, and covers both object and non-object complement. Cf. Strang, 1962: 72; Barbara Strang describes the complement as used in this sense as 'the principal non-verb component of the predicate' and notes that the different kinds of complement are 'distinguished by their relationship through the verb to the subject'.

Of the clauses of mental process, the type *the play pleased John* could, it was suggested, be regarded as non-middle with the phenomenon, here obligatory, as causer; while the type *John liked the play* was a middle form with the phenomenon, here optional, functioning in a way similar to the range in action clauses. The distinction is borne out by the identifying clauses: *what the play did to John was please him* but not *what John did to the play was like it*. These, again, can be accounted for by the features of action clauses, in combination with a feature 'mental process' making up a third term in the system 'action / relation / mental process'. Mental process clauses occur in unmarked voice only and in some cases, such as *please/like*, the non-middle and middle forms pair suppletively to form nuclear paradigms; other do not and thus are effective or descriptive. If the phenomenon is present, whether as causer or as range, there is a further option 'phenomenon / metaphenomenon' with the latter being in turn either fact or report; and the feature 'mental process' itself embodies the options of reaction, perception, cognition and verbalization, of which the last cannot be non-middle but may be benefactive. The options up to this point, which are only the most general ones but show the relation to clauses of other types, could be represented thus:



In the most general terms, the resources of transitivity might be said to consist of the voice system, based on the opposition of middle / non-middle, a set of clause types defined by unmarked voice, and various dependent secondary or sub-systems, which combine with the three principal types of process, action, relation and mental process, to yield a paradigm of syntactic feature complexes for the expression of the broadest categories of experiential meaning. The voice system itself, and the functions derivable from it, seem to be most readily generalizable if formulated in ergative terms, with middle / non-middle represent-

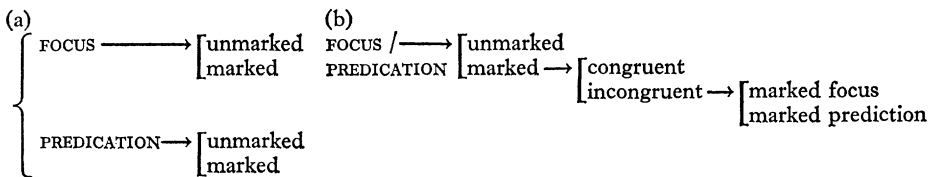
ing a primary opposition between a process involving one participant only, the affected, and one having two participants, an affected and a causer. Only the most general options have been considered; the distinction into process types is that which seems best to account for this range of options and for the different interpretations of the features and structural functions.

9.2. *Theme clause types.* The thematic options were outlined in sections 4–7 (Part 2); the systems recognized included information distribution (number and location of information units in the clause), information focus (simple or compound, marked or unmarked), thematization (marked or unmarked, together with optional discoursal and modal theme), identification, predication and substitution. These, together with various derivative secondary and sub-systems, might be represented diagrammatically as on p. 207.

Among these options are a number of pairs of systems related to one another by a particular form of congruence, one which seems to reflect a possible historical process; in most such instances, one of the two systems concerned is realized by intonation. For example,

| PREDICATION |          |                                             |                                                        |
|-------------|----------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
|             |          | unmarked                                    | marked                                                 |
| FOCUS       | unmarked | <sup>1</sup> // John saw <b>the play</b> // | <sup>2</sup> // it was John who saw <b>the play</b> // |
|             | marked   | <sup>3</sup> // <b>John</b> saw the play // | <sup>4</sup> // it was <b>John</b> who saw the play // |

where (1) is unmarked both in predication and in focus, (2) and (3) are each unmarked in one of the two, and (4) is marked in both; yet (4), while being marked relative to (1), is unmarked relative to (2) and (3). There is an association between the two systems such that, in the environment of 'marked focus', 'marked predication' is unmarked, and vice versa. Underlying (a), as it were, is (b):



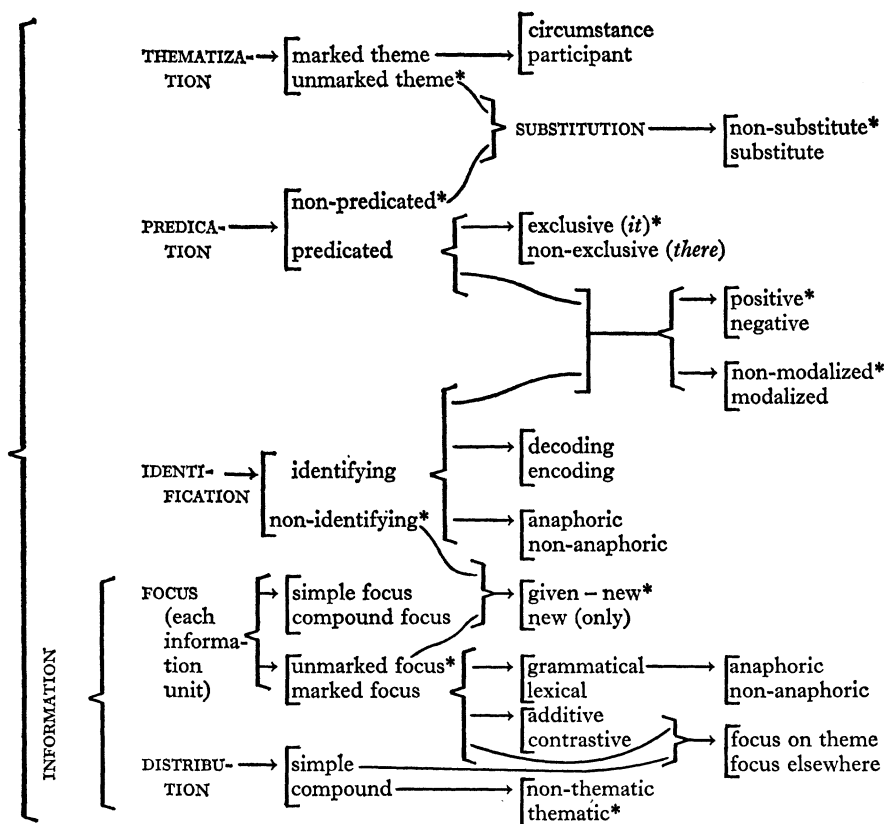
Similar pairs are formed by thematization and information distribution: (1) // John saw the play //, (4) // the play // John saw //, (2) and (3) // the play John saw // and // John // saw the play //; and by information focus (simple / compound) and substitution: (1) // John saw **the play** //, (4) // he saw **the play** / **John** //, (2) and (3) // he saw **the play** John // and // **John** saw **the play** //.

Possibly at some stage there was a simple opposition of (1) to (4) in each case, with complex realization involving both intonational and structural distinctions,

for example as in // John saw **the play** // contrasted with // it was **John** who saw the play //. Subsequently, as if by a kind of economy of resources, the two come to represent distinct options, selection within each being made independently of the other. The pattern is not limited to instances where one system is realized by intonation: there is a similar reversal of marking to be found in the relation of substitution to what might be called 'phenomenalization' (cf. 8.3 above), such that if the subject in a mental process clause is a 'metaphenomenon' (fact or report) the substitute form is the unmarked one: (1) *what he saw pleased him*, (4) *it pleased him to see everything settled*, (2) and (3) *it pleased him, what he saw and to see everything settled pleased him*. A more problematical instance, likewise involving interaction between transitivity and theme, has also been referred to earlier: while in the identification system the non-identifying option is normally unmarked, if the clause is a decoding equative clause it may be the identifying form that should be regarded as the unmarked one: (1) *we saw the play*, (4) *what we heard was the overture*, (2) and (3) *what we saw was the play and we heard the overture*, where (3) has the sense of (4) in that the implied question is not the (mental) process question *what did we hear?* but the relational question *what was that we heard?* It is doubtful here how widely the type exemplified by (3) exists as an option, or what its significance is; in general, however, the incongruent forms in all such patterns can be explained as being meaningful options in the organization of discourse.

There is a kind of congruence involved also in the choice between active and passive, the operative / receptive option in the voice system. This again, as pointed out in 5.2 above, is an option relating to both transitivity and theme, and it is perhaps one of the most illuminating examples of the relation between the two. Among the theme systems, both thematization and information focus are involved. The meaning of the choice of passive can be said to be the decision (a) that a nominal other than the causer will be thematic, while remaining, as a theme, unmarked, and/or (b) that the causer either (i) will be unspecified or (ii) if specified will carry information focus, the focus likewise remaining unmarked. The effect of this is that the 'affected' participant can be thematic even when a causer is present; and that, notwithstanding the modal requirement that the clause must have a subject, the causer can be omitted even from a clause featuring external causation. Since marked and unmarked forms are significantly different, the stipulation 'while remaining unmarked' is a meaningful one: marked forms are contrastive on both axes, which means that, in addition to the foregrounding that a marked form has on the paradigmatic axis, marking brings with it also syntagmatic prominence – syntagmatically, a marked theme tends regularly to be a separate information unit, while marked information focus excludes all but the focal element itself from the domain of the 'new'. The difference can be seen by comparing the receptive // the books were sold by **John** // with others, for example // **John** sold the books // (where only *John* can be new), or // **the books**

// **John** sold //, which has theme and focus the same as the receptive form except that both are marked. So while in the preferred, operative form of a non-middle clause the most 'active' participant is the point of departure for the message and not the point of information (see 10.2 below), the receptive option reverses this relationship, but in doing so maintains the congruence between theme and focus.



It can be predicted from this that, when the affected is new, for example in answer to *what did John sell?*, the receptive form // **the books** were sold by John // will be highly improbable; the causer is present but is not new, so that there is no motive for selecting the agentive form (if *the books* was required to be thematic as well as new the likely form would be // (it was) **the books** (that) John sold //). But in answer to, or implying, *who sold the books?*, the receptive // the books were sold by **John** // is entirely appropriate. There is thus also a thematic explanation for the unlikelihood of *the tall one is you* in answer to *which am I?*, contrasting with the appropriateness of *you're the tall one* in answer to *which is me?*; compare // **the play** was liked by John // whose improbability is likewise due to reasons both

of transitivity and of theme. The interaction of transitivity and theme in the operative / receptive system could be represented as on p. 208, taking as the starting-point for the sake of simplicity just those cases where the thematic elements are participants.

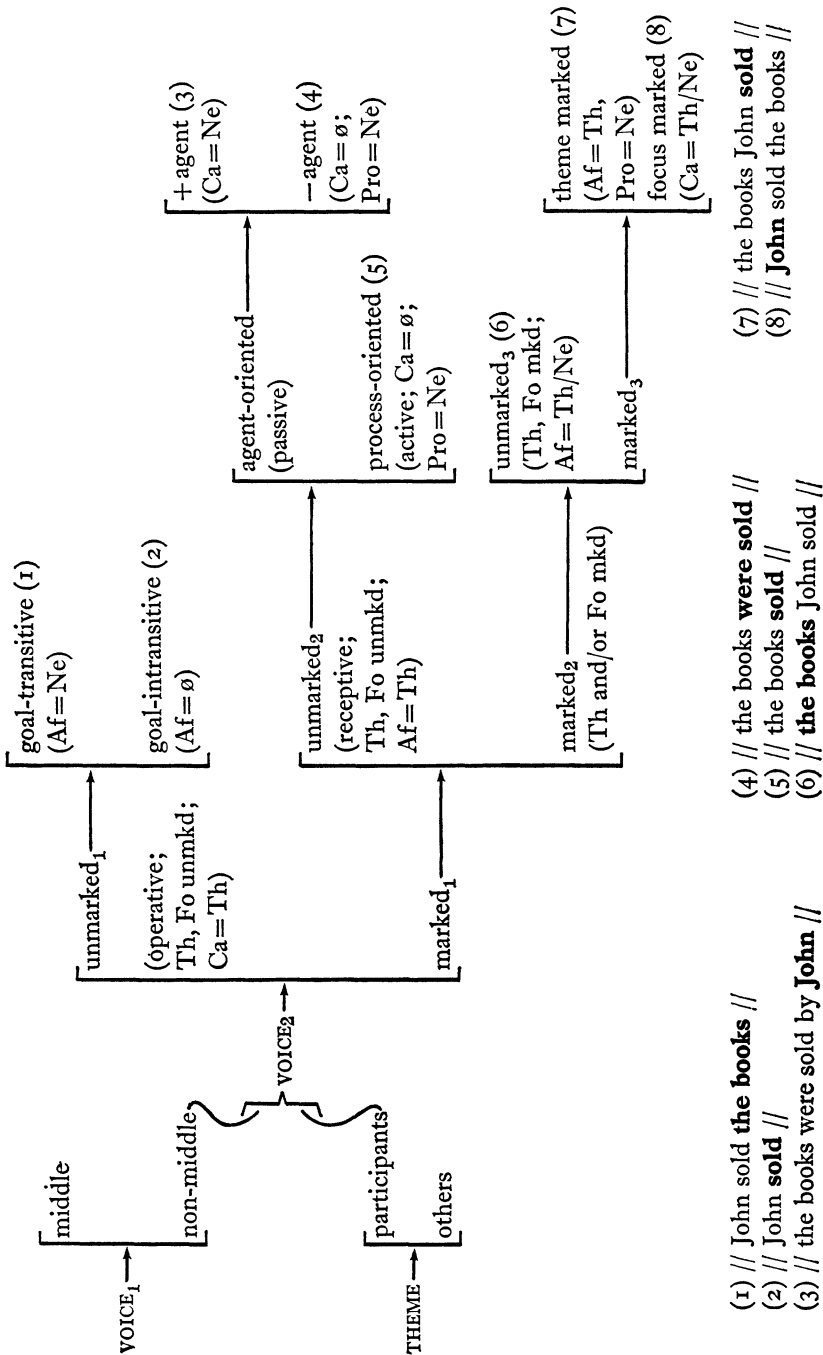
#### 10. TRANSITIVITY AND THEME IN THE GRAMMAR OF ENGLISH

10.1. *Components of grammar.* The discussion at the end of the last section suggested that the voice system entails a twofold selection: one aspect of it is the selection of the clause type, which determines what possibilities there will be for the distribution of participant functions among the various functions in the message; the other is the options by which they are distributed, and in particular mapped on to the two peaks of communicative prominence. Interaction of this kind between transitivity and theme exemplifies a general pattern: since a constituent may have value in many systems simultaneously, there are options specifying how the values are to be combined, options which link together the different functions which language is required to fulfil.

That language has multiple function is a well-established concept, and there have been various classifications of the functions of language, such as Bühler's into representational, expressive and conative, or Malinowski's into pragmatic and magical, offering alternatives to the undifferentiated notion of language as the expression of thought. According to the 'multiple function' view it is a universal of culture that all languages are called upon to fulfil a small set of distinct though related demands. These can be couched in various terms, psychological or cultural-situational, and with varying degrees of differentiation; they are conceived of, in general, as uses of the language system, rather than as properties of the system as such.

Yet this plurality of language function is reflected in the system, and different parts of the system realize different functions; not in the sense that a given sentence has one function and is therefore specified exclusively by one component of the system, but in the sense that, while every sentence expresses a combination of functions and thus all parts of the system have contributed to its specification, it is possible to formulate the contribution made by each part. If we represent the set of options available to the speaker in the grammar of the English clause, these options group themselves into a small number of subsets, distinct from one another in that, while within each group of options there is a very high degree of interdependence, between any two groups the amount of interdependence, though by no means negligible, is very much less. This provides a syntactic basis for the concept of language functions, and suggests how the diversity of functions recognizable at the semantic levels may be organized in the course of realization.

It seems possible to set up four components in the grammar of English representing four functions that the language as a communication system is



required to carry out: the experiential, the logical, the discoursal and the speech-functional or interpersonal. In other words the total system of syntactic options appears to fall into four sub-systems which could be labelled in this way. This does not contradict other, higher level categorizations but characterizes the deployment of grammatical resources whereby the more abstract functions are as it were translated into action. As formulated here they emerge from a consideration of English, although they may be relevant more generally. Perhaps the one that would be thought of as most central is the experiential component: the linguistic expression of the speaker's experience of the external world, including the inner world of his own consciousness – his emotions, perceptions and so on. This component of the grammar provides a conceptual framework for the encoding of experience in terms of processes, objects, persons, qualities, states, abstractions and relations; it is sometimes referred to as 'cognitive', and experiential meaning as 'cognitive meaning', although as suggested earlier all components presuppose a cognitive level of organization. The term 'meaning' in its lay use usually suggests experiential, or experiential together with logical, meaning; but if the implication is that other areas of syntactic choice are not meaningful it may be desirable to emancipate technical usage from everyday terminology in this respect. The experiential component could be referred to as a 'content' component, were it not that this calls to mind the form / content opposition, which is irrelevant in the present context. The term 'experiential' makes it clear that the underlying function is seen not as the expression of 'reality' or 'the outer world' but as the expression of patterns of experience; the content given to an utterance by this portion of the language system derives from the shared experience of those participating in the speech situation.

The experiential component is closely related to Bühler's representational function, and to Daneš's (1964: 226) 'semantic structure'. Both of these, however, subsume the logical function; for while the logical structure of language has often been investigated apart from the experiential, in linguistic philosophy, the converse has not been the case: the experiential has usually included the logical even where the term 'logical' has been used to cover both, as for example by Sweet (1891: 6, 10–11). The three terms 'semantic', 'representational' and 'logical' refer to different aspects of this combined function: 'semantic' suggests its place in the total linguistic system, 'representational' emphasizes its relation to extra-linguistic factors, while 'logical' implies an underlying structure that is independent of syntax and may be opposed merely to 'grammatical' as 'meaning' to 'form' (Sweet, *loc. cit.*). At the grammatical level, however, there are certain features which tend to mark off the logical component, although not sharply, for example in its structural realizations: most paratactic and hypotactic structures express logical meanings. The logical component provides for the linguistic expression of such universal relations as those of 'and', 'or', negation and implication; and presumably it also underlies the subject – predicate

structure of the clause, although this is derivable from another source (cf. below).

At the same time the language system comprises two other, rather less well documented functions, the discoursal and the interpersonal. The former meets the basic requirement of every language that it should be able to create texts. The speaker of a language can recognize a text; his ability to discriminate between a random string of sentences and one forming a discourse is due to the inherent texture in the language and to his awareness of it. One aspect of the discourse function is thus 'grammar above the sentence', the area often known as 'discourse structure' and concerned with the options that are available to the speaker for relating one sentence to another. But the discoursal function of language embodies also the means whereby what is said may be structured as a piece of communication, and this involves grammar below the sentence. The construction of discourse demands resources not only for attaching a sentence to what has preceded it but also for organizing the sentence in such a way that it is appropriate as information in the context. For example, the following is acceptable as text:

No-one else had known where the entrance to the cave was situated. The one who discovered the cave was John.

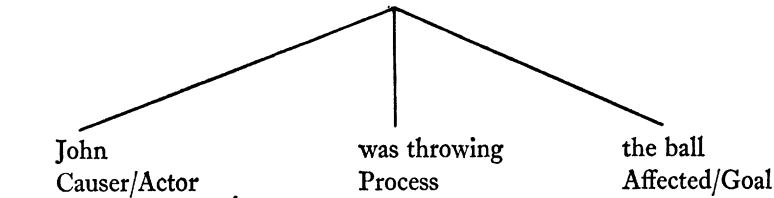
But if the second sentence is replaced by *what John discovered was the cave* the two sentences no longer form a text: the second 'does not make sense' in the context of the first. Its experiential meaning is unchanged; it is as information that it is nonsensical.

The fourth component is concerned with the expression of interpersonal or 'speech-functional' relations. The discoursal component already entails a hearer, or rather an interlocutor, since although narrative and other forms of monologue are recognizable as text the greater part of discourse in the spoken medium involves more than one participant. But in the interpersonal function of language the hearer is an indispensable element throughout. In addition to the well-described speech functions, statement, question and answer, command and exclamation, the interpersonal component includes such options as those of 'speaker's comment', on the probabilities, the degree of relevance, &c., of the message, and of speaker's attitude (for example confirmation, reservation, contradiction). These options provide a means for the expression of the linguistic roles that can be occupied by the speaker in a communication situation.

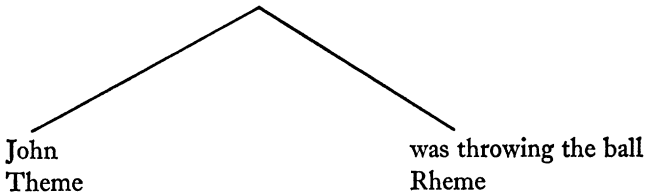
How these functions relate to the syntax of the clause, and in particular to the areas treated in the present paper, has been summarized above: the transitivity systems represent the experiential element in the clause, the theme systems the discoursal ('theme' as used in the title also covers the information systems, which strictly speaking do not originate in the clause, although treated here as clause systems). The interpersonal function is represented in the clause by the systems of mood, which were referred to in section 5.2, and modality. Each set of options, it was suggested, specifies its own constituent structure; in other words, each component contributes a set of possible structures whose elements,

the individual functions, are combined with those of the other components to form complex elements of structure such as Subject/Causer/Theme. Thus, for example:

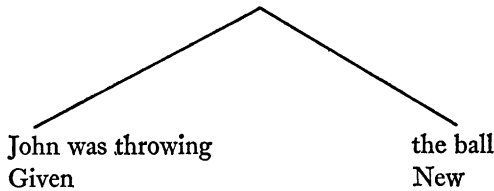
(1) transitivity (experiential component):



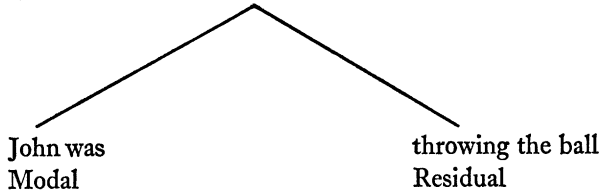
(2) theme (discoursal component)



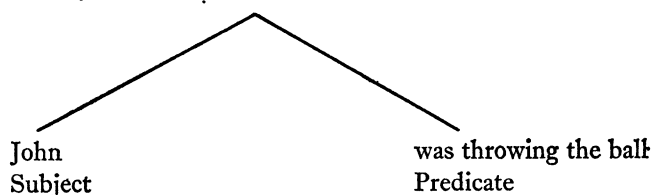
(3) information (discoursal component), assuming the reading // John was throwing **the ball** // (in one interpretation):



(4) mood (interpersonal component):



(5) predication (logical component)



It seems likely that a number of problems that have arisen in linguistic analysis have been due to the attempt to make the logical structure do duty for the other

components. The subject – predicate analysis has nothing to do with transitivity, and the logical element in the description of the clause appears to be, in English, entirely dispensable (cf. Fillmore, 1966: 4), since it is fully derivable from the modal structure. The logical subject is identical with the modal subject except in a few instances, those involving substitute *it* and *there*; and the place of the finite element of the verbal group, *was* in the above example, depends on whether the logical or the modal structure is under consideration: in the former it forms part of the predicate, while in the modal structure it enters into the constituent that realizes the modal options. The structural functions may be thought of as specified by the sets of features derived from each component; in terms of transitivity and theme the clause *John was throwing the ball* has, up to the point reached, the following features (omitting some of those defined negatively):

{action: {effective: I<sub>1</sub>, goal-transitive / non-middle: operative: I<sub>1</sub>}};

{unmarked theme: I<sub>2</sub>, non-substitute / non-predicated: I<sub>2</sub> / non-identifying:

I<sub>3</sub>, given – new / unmarked focus: I<sub>3</sub> / simple information distribution}

In some cases a function may be specified in one component and modified in some way by a feature in another; for example, functions such as affected and causer are specified in transitivity, but without ordering, and it is their mapping on to the thematic functions that introduces ordering into the transitivity structure and, in doing so, assigns prominence to the different transitivity functions. Certain generalizations can be made about the meaning of such interaction between the two components.

10.2. *Interrelation of transitivity and theme.* Two of the theme systems may be seen as assigning prominence to some part of a defined constituent: thematization, which assigns prominence in the clause, and information focus, which assigns prominence within a constituent that is specified by the discourse component but is in the unmarked case mapped on to the clause. The prominence is of a different kind in the two systems, although both kinds have generally been referred to as ‘emphasis’ (e.g. by Sweet, 1891: 195 and 1898: 29); the elements regarded as emphatic are elements which are normally dissociated from one another, theme in the theme – rheme structure and new in the given – new structure (the unmarked association being that of theme with given and of rheme with new). The two seem at first sight to be almost contradictory, since the theme is the speaker’s stepping-off point and the new is what he presents as non-recoverable information; yet they are not incompatible, since in the last resort they may be combined into a single element. The fact that the two systems are realized very differently, the one by the sequence of elements and the other by phonological prominence, both suggests their different roles in the discourse and permits selection in either system independently of the other.

The focus of information falls, in the unmarked instance, on the last non-anaphoric element in the information unit; it tends, therefore, to be associated

with an element that is final in the clause. Where the focus is unmarked, its domain – the extent of the constituent having the function ‘new’ – is, as was pointed out in 4.4, ambiguous: it may extend forward over as much as the whole of the information unit. Thus the nearer an item is to the end of the clause the more probable it is that that item will carry prominence as informationally ‘new’. The preferred ordering of elements in the clause, relative to final position, thus can be considered to represent the preferred assignment, to status in the information structure, of functions specified in some other component. As far as the modal organization of the clause is concerned, for example, it is clear that the modal constituent has a very low probability of being informationally new; and when it is new, as in most tag questions, this can be seen as marked prominence within some system, such as that of polarity, that is realized in the modal constituent. In // John was throwing **the ball** // **wasn’t he** //, the focus of information on the repeated modal constituent *wasn’t he* makes the request for confirmation or denial into an information point.

In the transitivity structure of the clause, there is a tendency for circumstances, where present, to follow participants; adjuncts, in other words, apart from those directly associated with the ‘closed’ verbal categories of tense and polarity, and discourse and modal adjuncts (which have no function in transitivity), normally occur towards the end of the clause. If there is an expression of time or manner or other circumstance that element will tend to occur in a position in which, in the unmarked case, it will have, alone or with other elements, the value ‘new’ (the next most favoured position for such items being clause initial, where they have prominence of the other kind). There is thus a relation between position in the clause and status in transitivity; and this is further reflected in the selection between different forms of realization. While in general participants are realized as nominals and circumstances as adverbials or prepositional groups, many of the elements designated as participants may appear in the clause in either of two forms, either without or with preposition (see, again, the excellent discussion in Fillmore, 1966); and it was suggested in section 2.1 that the two differed significantly in thematic terms. For example, the beneficiary, when other than subject, is realized as a nominal if it precedes the affected and with a preposition if it follows it; in the position where it will carry the unmarked information focus it is realized as it were circumstantially. Hence a clause such as *he gave the book to John on Thursday* is unlikely, since the motive for realizing the beneficiary prepositionally is absent; if it does occur it presupposes a question in which *John* did carry information focus: // when did you give the book to **John** //. There is the usual counter-tendency (not a counter-example) whereby in order to achieve the foregrounding effect of marked information focus the converse selection is made: // he gave **John** the book //, // he gave **the book** to John //, whose effectiveness, like that of other marked discourse options, is due to the existence of an alternative that is unmarked.

Similar considerations dictate the selection of the agentive form of the receptive; the agent is the causer disguised as a circumstantial element and occupying the position of unmarked focus. Where there is no circumstantial element in the clause, the unmarked focus will tend to fall on the range, if there is one, otherwise on the affected or, sometimes, the process. But the verb, in fact, is not readily associated with any form of prominence in the discourse; it is very rarely thematic (cf. section 5.3, Part 2, p. 218), and where it might attract the unmarked information focus other factors often intervene. One is the tendency in many middle, and agentless passive, clauses for the focus to fall on the affected, as in *the door opened*, *snow's falling*, *French is spoken*; clearly the process is not 'given' here, but rather enters with the nominal into a single informational constituent (cf. 9.1). Another factor is the use of phrasal verbs, a phenomenon whose prevalence is perhaps partly to be explained by the fact that it provides a quasi-circumstantial element to carry unmarked focus: // John sat **down** //, // why don't they give **up** //. (This is further suggested by the otherwise inexplicable rule whereby the adverb may, but need not, follow an anaphoric object – where either may be focal without being marked: // leave John **out** //, // leave out **John** // – but must follow an anaphoric object unless that object carries contrastive focus: // leave him **out** //; // leave out **him** // but invite **her** //.)

The element that never carries unmarked focus in an operative clause, and is thus least likely to be a non-recoverable element in the message, is the most 'active' participant, the causer; this underlines one of the reasons suggested in 9.2 for the choice of the receptive form. The fact that, in the receptive, the causer is then realized prepositionally, as an agent, is not fortuitous: in *this house was bought by John*, as in *he gave the book to John*, *John* resembles a 'circumstance' in being marked out from the process – affected complex as a distinct informational entity; hence the improbability of clauses with the agent in other positions such as *by John this house was bought* (cf. section 5.2).

Thematic prominence is also related to transitivity, but through the modal structure rather than directly, since initial position in the clause also operates to signal speech function. In interrogative and imperative the theme is defined modally: it is a request for information (structurally, the WH- or polarity-carrying element), or a request for action (structurally, the process together with appropriate features of polarity and person). In the declarative the unmarked theme is the subject and this, in unmarked voice, is the 'doer'; in other words the subject tends to be the most 'active' participant present: causer, or affected, or beneficiary, or range. Thus thematic prominence tends to be assigned to the more 'central' among the clause elements, the participants which occupy the active roles in transitivity; and this, together with the opposite tendency in information focus, which favours the more 'peripheral' elements, especially circumstances, defines in general terms a preferred clause type for transitivity and theme. This is one in which the initiating, often anaphoric, element in the message is the element

most closely associated with the process; and the culminating, information-carrying element is that which is most remote.

But this is merely the most unmarked type, and endless variation is possible, all of which is meaningful. The discursual component provides, through the encoding equative structure, the means for distributing the experiential functions in every possible way over the functions theme – rheme and given – new; any combination of participants and circumstances, including even the process, can be made into a theme by nominalization in the identification system. This in turn is part of the explanation for the tendency to nominalize in English. Nominalization is one of the resources for achieving maximum thematic variation, since it allows any set of elements to be grouped together as a constituent, and thus to be mapped on to any function in the discourse structure, such as theme or new. At the same time, through the use of the equative structure, the elements combined in this way enter into an identifying relation with the remaining element or elements of the clause; this is an exclusive relation, one which is defining in the given context, so that it constitutes a highly effective form of communication.<sup>4</sup> The possibility of organizing processes, participants and circumstances in the structural status of nominals helps to ensure for the components of experiential meaning their freedom and flexibility in the discourse. It has been hoped to suggest here that such flexibility is not mere decoration, but is a prerequisite to the functioning of language as a meaningful system.<sup>5</sup>

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- [4] For the use of this form (as well as of other forms in the paradigm of thematic variants) in scientific English, see Huddleston *et al.* (1968).
- [5] It is hoped to publish Parts 1–3 of this paper together as a monograph (in the series *Cambridge Studies in Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press), with revision in the light of criticisms and of recent articles which I was not able to take into account in the preparation of the present version.