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The Nature of Subjects, Topics and Agents:
A Cognitive Explanation

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DISSERTATION

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OF THE

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DECEMBER 18, 1984
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On the Nature of Subjects, Topics and Agents:
A Cognitive Explanation

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Jeanne Hillechiena van Oosten

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Are Subjects Primitive or Predictable?

Within contemporary syntactic theory, there has been a long-standing dispute as to whether grammatical relations such as subject are dependent on or independent of semantic and pragmatic considerations. Before the advent of transformational grammar, this was not an issue. Although linguists disagreed about exactly how the subject related to semantic factors like case role or pragmatic factors like old information, focus of attention, aboutness etc., they were generally agreed that subjects related to these considerations in some way or other in a regular fashion[1]. With transformational grammar, however, came the idea that subjects could be defined purely syntactically, based on constituent structure[2]. In other words, the category of subject could be defined independently of semantic and pragmatic considerations, because it and the other syntactic relations could be predicted from the constituent structure of a sentence.

Although Relational Grammar was designed specifically because it did not seem to its proponents that subjects could be predicted consistently from the constituent structure of a sentence, especially

cross-linguistically, relational grammarians denied this notion without denying the independent status of grammatical relations. It is possible for relational grammarians to continue to hold that grammatical relations are independent of semantic and pragmatic considerations because Relational Grammar considers grammatical relations primitive, that is, they have no internal structure and cannot be derived from any other notion or notions. According to relational grammarians, grammatical relations are thus independent but primitive, rather than independent and predictable, as the transformational grammarians hold. This is one of the two basic tenets of Relational Grammar. In the words of Perlmutter (1983:(ix)f.)(3):

The grammatical relations needed for individual grammars and for cross-linguistic generalizations cannot be defined in terms of other notions, but must be taken as primitive notions of syntactic theory.

I claim in this dissertation that the formulation of this controversy is incorrect in that grammatical relations are not, in fact, independent of semantic and pragmatic factors. Subjects are indeed not primitive, but they are also not independent of nonsyntactic factors.

Previous attempts to claim that subjects were not primitive assumed that they had to be defined in terms of other primitives. The concept of definition taken for granted in such attempts was the traditional concept which made use of necessary and sufficient conditions. I will be suggesting that this was the mistake. In place of the traditional concept of definition, I suggest the use of prototype theory. What is predictable from semantics and pragmatics is not all subjects, but prototypical subjects.

It is the purpose of this dissertation to lay out how one grammatical relation, subject, of one language, English, is organized in terms of the semantic notion 'agent' and the pragmatic or discourse notion of 'topic.' This in itself is not new. Much work has been done in the Sixties and Seventies on an investigation, both universally and language-specifically, of the relation between subjecthood, semantic roles and discourse considerations, and this has been a common conclusion to come to for English[4]. What is new is the findings about the particular structure of English subjects in terms of these two notions. In particular, I have found that:

1. English subjects are motivated by a prototype containing notions of 'agent' and 'topic' (as well as grammatical characteristics like agreement).
2. The categories of 'agent' and 'topic' themselves have prototype structure.
3. The definition of English subject is different for the different constructions of English, though always in terms of topic and agent. In fact, the reason the different constructions are used is to convey that the referent of the subject is not a prototypical agent or is not a prototypical topic, or both -- and the use of the construction has implications for the subset of agent and topic characteristics that the subject of the construction does have.
4. As a consequence one can see that the category 'subject' is

grammaticized, contrary to what is implied in Role-and-Reference Grammar (Van Valin and Foley 1980[5]): each syntactic construction triggers a different subset of agent and topic characteristics as its prototype for the subject of the construction. Thus, although subjects are never primitive nor totally unpredictable, they are grammaticized to an extent: their exact meaning depends on the syntactic construction in which they occur.

5. Prototypes are ubiquitous in language. Others have demonstrated the need for prototypes in the area of semantics[6]. My research demonstrates it for the syntactic categories passive and subject, the semantico-syntactic categories of the pronouns (my research has focused particularly on I, you, they) and the pragmatic categories agent and topic[7]. Based on this and the previous research, one can conclude that it would be advisable to operate as a starting hypothesis on the assumption that all categories of language have prototype structure, until it is proven otherwise for a certain category. Under this assumption, language has the same types of categories as other conceptual systems. This is obviously the simplest type of assumption to make (cf. Lakoff 1977:237).

In short, the alternative I will be proposing in this dissertation is roughly the following:

In basic sentences, the prototypical subject refers to a prototypical agent and is a prototypical topic.

1.2 Prototypical Topics

I will be spelling out below exactly what this means in detail (and making a technical change or two). What is of particular interest here is that the concepts 'agent' and 'topic' are themselves characterized by prototypes rather than by necessary and sufficient conditions. This is particularly important for the concept topic. Many attempts have been made to define topic in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions or in terms of some single condition which must hold in all cases -- for example, old information, background, given information, focus of attention, entity being talked about, etc. What I will argue is that there is something right about each of these single-condition definitions, but that, in the prototypical topic, they are all jointly present. This will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.

In Chapter 2 I also discuss a new view of the layering of topics. Although linguists have talked before about discourse topics, in general not a clear enough distinction is made between discourse and sentence topics. Nor is the relation between them generally made clear. In Chapter 2 I propose that discourse topics are schemata or scenes that are relevant at the moment of speaking, or evaluations, generalizations or examples of schemata or scenes that are relevant at the moment of speaking. Sentence topics are the linguistic manifestation of a discourse topic or of a Representor of a discourse topic, where a

Representor is a subpart of the discourse topic which is used to evoke the entire discourse topic. For example, mentioning John might evoke the entire scene of an occurrence in which John was recently involved; John would then be the Representor of the scene, which would be a discourse topic.

In addition, I propose in Chapter 2 that topics can be categorized in a way analogous to the categorization of natural objects proposed by Rosch (1977, 1978). That is, there are superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics. A superordinate topic is a mental structure like a schema, a scene, or an evaluation, generalization or example of a schema or scene. A basic-level topic is a participant part of such a superordinate topic. For example, in a commercial-event schema, participant parts would be the buyer, the seller, the goods and the money. A subordinate topic is a part or an aspect of a basic-level topic. For example, if John is a basic-level topic, then his clothes or his body or a part of his body would be a subordinate topic if they were to be mentioned in the discourse.

This categorization of topics is orthogonal to the function of topics as discourse or sentence topics. A sentence topic can be a superordinate, basic-level or subordinate topic. For example, the sentence topic in 1a is probably the whole thing and this is probably a superordinate topic; the sentence topic in 1b is probably Joan and this is probably a basic-level topic; and the sentence topic in 1c is probably my hand and this is probably a subordinate topic.

1a. Let's just forget the whole thing.

- b. Joan isn't coming.
- c. My hand hurts.

I insist on the inclusion of the word probably in these descriptions because it is only possible to make definite judgments about the identity or status of topics within the linguistic context in which they occur. The examples in 1, of course, are intentionally examples about which there cannot be much question, but this is not always the case.

1.3 Prototypical Primaries

Agents too are defined not by necessary and sufficient conditions, but by a prototype. A prototypical agent, as we will see in Chapter 4, is one that is responsible for the action, that is the principal energy source, and that wills the action.

The major technical change that has to be made in our definition of prototypical subject involves the term 'agent.' The term 'agent' works fine for basic action sentences, in which there is an agent in the frame. But not all basic sentences are action sentences. "The cat is on the mat" and "Mary arrived" are after all just as basic as "John hit the ball" and "The farmer killed the duckling."

Fillmore (1968) suggested that there is a set of semantic case roles like 'agentive,' 'objective,' 'dative,' 'instrumental,' 'locative' and others; that verbs can be subclassified according to the type of

"case frame" they can appear in, that is, according to the array(s) of cases that can appear in the sentence with them; and that the semantic cases arrange themselves into a hierarchy of cases, the topmost one of which occurring in a certain sentence will be chosen as the subject. Since the publication of this paper, many of the details of the theory have been criticized and altered; the names, number and definitions of the cases have been changed; and the notion of "case frame" has been attached to verbs rather than to sentences; but nevertheless the notion of semantic cases, case frames and a case hierarchy has remained. In this dissertation I will be referring to the semantic roles 'agent,' 'patient,' 'experiencer,' 'instrument' and 'benefactive.' (This is not an exhaustive listing of the possible case roles.) These entities are among those mentioned in the case frame of a verb. They are to be understood more or less as follows:

agent	a typically human participant, instigator of the action expressed by the verb, who is responsible for the action, wills the action, and is the principal energy source for the action, and who experiences the action
patient	a human or non-human participant in the action or state expressed by the verb; the patient undergoes the action or state; if the verb expresses an action, the patient undergoes a change by the action, and is the energy goal of the action
experiencer	a typically human locus of a mental or emotional experience; the entity from whose point of view the event is viewed; there is no sense of energy source, instigation or responsibility on the part of the experiencer
instrument	a typically non-human participant which is an intermediate locus of energy in the action between the agent and the patient expressed by the verb
benefactive	a typically human participant which benefits in some way from the state or action expressed by the verb

These cases arrange themselves in the following "case hierarchy":

agent

experiencer

instrument

patient

benefactive

In the actions, events or states expressed by the following basic sentences,

- 2a. The cat is on the mat.
- b. Mary arrived.
- c. John hit the ball.
- d. The farmer killed the duckling for his wife.
- e. Harold loves Marsha.

the cat, the ball, the duckling and Marsha are patients; Mary, John and the farmer are agents; Harold is an experiencer and the farmer's wife is a benefactive. (The mat is a location; this semantic role will not be discussed here.) The cat, the ball, the duckling and Marsha are patient nouns or words in the patient case; Mary, John and the farmer are agent nouns or words in the agent case; Harold is an experiencer noun or a word in the experiencer case; and his wife is a benefactive noun or a word in the benefactive case[8].

It is clear that not every basic sentence has an agent. My proposal for the definition of subject in English, as expressed on page 4, would not apply to those sentences which did not have an agent case. I therefore suggest the term primary for the NP holding the semantic

relation highest on the semantic case-role hierarchy in a particular sentence. In 2a, the primary is a patient noun; in 2b,c,d, the primary is an agent noun; and in 2e, the primary is an experiencer noun.

We can now reformulate our alternative thesis as follows:

In basic sentences, the prototypical subject is both a prototypical topic and a prototypical primary.

Thus, if the primary is an agent noun, it refers to a prototypical agent; if it is an experiencer noun, it refers to a prototypical experiencer, and if it is a patient noun, it refers to a prototypical patient. And so on.

For "basic sentence" I am adopting a stricter version of Keenan's (1976:307) definition. Keenan suggested criteria (a) and b(i) below; I am adding criterion b(ii):

For any language L,

- a. a syntactic structure x is semantically more basic than a syntactic structure y if, and only if, the meaning of y depends on that of x. That is, to understand the meaning of y it is necessary to understand the meaning of x.
- b. a sentence in L is a basic sentence (in L) if, and only if,
 - (i) no (other) complete sentence in L is more basic than it, and
 - (ii) the sentence exhibits the basic case frame of its verb.

Based on (a) and b(i), a passive sentence is not a basic sentence because it depends for its meaning on the corresponding active, which may or may not be basic but at any rate is one step more basic than its corresponding passive; similarly a question is less basic than an affirmative sentence and a negative sentence is less basic than a positive sentence. Thus 3a is basic (since it also conforms to b(ii))

but 3b,c,d are not:

- 3a. John hit the ball.
- b. The ball was hit by John.
- c. Did John hit the ball?
- d. John didn't hit the ball.

By criterion b(ii), 4a below is a basic sentence, but the Patient-Subject sentence (see Section 4.1) in 4b is not:

- 4a. John drove the car to London.
- b. The car drives easily.

The basic case frame for drive has at least an agent and a patient. By criterion b(ii), a sentence containing the verb drive must contain both an agent and a patient in order to be a basic sentence. Sentence 4a fulfills that criterion but 4b does not. Hence it is not a basic sentence.

1.4 Constructions

There are many kinds of sentence-types, and all except the basic sentence type use special constructions. Some of those that mention the subject are passives, certain raisings, the Tough-construction, property factorings, there-constructions, clefts, etc. All of these have subjects. But, as I will argue, they are not prototypical subjects. In fact, I claim that such constructions serve the purpose of coding situations where the pairing of prototypical topic and prototypical primary with subject does not occur. As a result,

the subject of a basic sentence in English has a somewhat different definition than the subject of a sentence exhibiting a construction which mentions the subject.

This should not, on reflection, be too surprising, since the reason for using such a construction is precisely to state that the subject of the sentence containing the special construction does not have all the characteristics of the prototype.

In special constructions that mention the subject, the subject is paired not with the prototypical topic and primary, but with a set of nonprototypical topic and/or primary properties. For example, I argue in this dissertation that a passive like 5b is used instead of an active like 5a when the topic is not the agent, and it is important to specify the topic:

- 5a. Hoover canned him.
- b. He was canned by Hoover.

The subject of a passive construction is thus defined as 'the non-agent topic.'

On the other hand, in a sentence exhibiting one of the there-constructions (there is more than one), the agent does not vary from that in a basic sentence: it is the topic that differs from the prototype. The prototypical topic is assumed by the speaker to already be in the consciousness of the hearer; in a sentence exhibiting a there-construction this is not the case. Thus the existence of the garden is assumed to be in the hearer's consciousness by a speaker who

utters 6a; it is assumed to not be in the hearer's consciousness by a speaker who utters 6b:

- 6a. The garden is beautiful.
- b. There is a garden on three sides of the house.

Another example is the use of it-clefts, discussed in Chapter 3. I argue there that an it-cleft is used when there is some reason to place emphasis on the identity of the focus of attention. With prototypical topics that is not the case, as the focus of attention is such in the mind of the hearer as well as in the mind of the speaker. The difference between 7a and 7b, then,

- 7a. John cut the salami.
- b. It was John who cut the salami.

is that 7a is used when the speaker assumes that John is the focus of the hearer's attention and 7b is used when there are different entities competing for the hearer's focus of attention.

Other special constructions do not mention a subject. For example, the dative construction does not mention a subject. In sentences exhibiting such a construction, the subject is under the same definition as the equivalent sentence not exhibiting such a construction. There is, for example, no difference in the definition of the subject in 8b as compared to 8a:

- 8a. He gave the book to Mary.
- b. He gave Mary the book.

1.4.1 The Uses of the Passive

In Chapter 5 I discuss the uses of the passive construction. These corroborate rather directly and elegantly my formulation of the prototypical subject. We will see that there are essentially six uses for the agentless passive (without by-phrase) and six uses for the agented passive (with by-phrase). The six uses of the agentless passive are as follows:

1. The identity of the agent is irrelevant, "somebody"
2. the agent is very general, "people"
3. the action of the sentence is a corporate act, with no one agent
4. The action of the sentence was not caused by an individual human being, but by a whole situation or scene
5. The speaker wishes to leave the identity of the agent vague, for such reasons as politeness or expediency, or, sometimes, to reduce the assertion of responsibility for the agent
6. The emphasis is on the effect of the action on the patient, or on the result, rather than on the action of the agent

The six uses of the agented passive are as follows:

1. The identity of the object of the by-phrase is of transitory interest in the discourse
2. The patient is the focus of attention
3. the object of the by-phrase would be understood too (prototypically) agentively if subject of an active sentence
4. The object of the by-phrase has less responsibility, specifically blame, than would be asserted if it were the subject of an active sentence
5. The object of the by-phrase is new (and is to be the new sentence topic)
6. The object of the by-phrase is emphasized, for reasons of contrast, outrage, etc.

In themselves, these results are not surprising. They do, especially the uses of the agented passive, seem rather arbitrary and unrelated.

Most of the uses of the passive are negative ones, that is, they have to

do with characteristics of the non-subject rather than with the topicality of the noun phrase that achieves subject position. For example the first use of the agented passive does not claim that the identity of the subject is of interest for a longer period of time but only that the identity of the object of the by-phrase is of transitory interest. When one takes the converses of the negative uses of the passive, however, a unified picture results. The converses are a major subset of the definition of a prototypical subject. That is, where the reasons for using the passive are, schematically,

$$(\sim A \vee \sim B \vee \sim C \vee \sim D \vee \sim E \vee \sim F)$$

the characteristics of a prototypical subject are

$$(A \ \& \ B \ \& \ C \ \& \ D \ \& \ E \ \& \ F)$$

The uses of the passive thus corroborate our formulation of the meaning of the prototypical subject, since the statement of the uses of the passive and the complement of the statement of the characteristics of the prototypical subject, are logically equivalent:

$$(\sim A \vee \sim B \vee \sim C \vee \sim D \vee \sim E \vee \sim F) \equiv \sim(A \ \& \ B \ \& \ C \ \& \ D \ \& \ E \ \& \ F)$$

The passive is used when any one of these characteristics of subjects does not hold. We will see how this works out in terms of the specific uses of the passive in Section 5.1 below.

1.5 Nonprototypical Cases

The basic claim of this work is that subjects show certain semantic and pragmatic regularities. These regularities can be seen once one makes two distinctions:

- basic sentences vs. special constructions
- prototypical cases vs. nonprototypical cases

There are prototypical and nonprototypical occurrences of both basic sentences and sentences exhibiting special constructions. The fundamental regularity is that in basic sentences, prototypical subjects are both prototypical topics and prototypical primaries. But in nonprototypical basic sentences, the subject is not prototypical either. This theory not only makes predictions for the prototypical cases. It also makes predictions about what the nonprototypical cases will be like, both in basic sentences and in special constructions.

1.5.1 Basic Sentences

In basic sentences, the prototypicality of the primary is a more central characteristic than the prototypicality of the topic. As a result, most of the nonprototypical but still acceptable occurrences of basic sentences are missing one or more of the characteristics of the prototypical topic, rather than one or more of the characteristics of the prototypical primary. This is what is true of Bates and MacWhinney's statement (1982:204) that

English merges agent and topic in most cases, capitalizing on the

role of perspective in creating a statistical overlap between these two categories. When the overlap does break down, agency is more likely to dominate in assignment of subjectivalization.

It is in the category of basic sentences that agency (that is, more exactly, primarihood) prevails over topichood. Thus, for example, in Chafe's mini-dialogue (1976:48),

9 A: What happened to the lamp?
B: The dog knocked it over.

the primary and the sentence topic do not overlap: the dog is the primary (agent) but the sentence topic is it. When there is no particular need to overtly specify the topic as such, the agent remains in subject position. Compare the less natural dialogue in 10:

10 A: What happened to the lamp?
B: It was knocked over by the dog.

Note, however, that the agent must have some topic properties itself in order for it to be allowed to remain in subject position. When the agent is inanimate and indefinite, the passive sounds better. Compare 11 and 12:

11 A: What happened to the stopsign?
B: A car knocked it over.

12 A: What happened to the stopsign?
B: It was knocked over by a car.

Nevertheless, the subject of a basic sentence need not have any topical properties if a passive is not possible. In the second sentence of the following monologue,

13. The president of that company sure is spoiled.

A secretary comes by here every morning to get him a cup of our best coffee.

the subject is not only indefinite but also nonspecific and nonreferential. Specificity and referentiality are two characteristics of prototypical topics.

In spite of this evidence that the subjects of basic sentences do not have to be topics, nevertheless a prototypical subject of a basic sentence is a prototypical topic. There are two pieces of evidence for this. In the first place, the special constructions that exist for reasons of topichood, for example it-clefts and passives, show that the prototypical basic sentence gives the wrong implication about the topichood of the elements of the sentence. It-clefts are used when there is some question in the speaker's mind whether the hearer's attention is focused in the right place (for the progress of the discourse); and passive is used when the speaker wishes to make explicit the fact that the topic and the primary do not overlap. In the second place, basic sentences that deviate from topichood as well as primarihood are worse than basic sentences that deviate with respect to primarihood alone. For example, the basic case frame of kill has an agent case. The prototypical agent is human, animate, and has intentionality and responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate. A sentence like 14 thus deviates from the prototype in that the agent is not human or animate and did not have the intention to bring the action of the predicate about, but it does have primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate:

14. The crash killed Harry.

But it is still acceptable, for example in the response in 15:

- 15 A: It wasn't such a terrible crash, was it?
B: Well, it killed Harry.

A sentence like 16,

16. A crash killed Harry.

sounds much more deviant.

It has often been noticed before that these sentences are strange. People have given explanations of this strangeness by suggesting that subjecthood and indefiniteness, and especially nonreferential indefiniteness, are mutually exclusive. But in fact there are subjects with indefinite and nonreferential subjects, as we saw in 13. These are the nonprototypical cases. They occur when the two aspects of the prototypical subject, agent and topic, do not overlap.

1.5.2 Special Constructions

Each special construction that mentions the subject must have the subject paired with a particular nonprototypical set of topic and primary properties. Most special constructions that mention the subject (but not all) vary in their prototype from the basic-sentence prototype in their designation of topic properties, rather than in their designation of primary properties, except when the designation of the topic properties entails changes in the designation of the primary

properties as they relate to the subject, as in the case of the passive, which is used when the topic and primary do not match up and it is important to indicate this. Since the topic is made the subject, as a consequence the subject is not the primary. But the actual characteristics of the primary (e.g., intentionality, humanness, etc.) are not different in the passive construction than in the active construction. The fact that a special construction that mentions the subject is matched up with a particular nonprototypical set of topic and primary properties, allows us to make predictions about what the best examples of special constructions will, and will not, be. The best example of a particular special construction will be the one whose subject best matches the subject prototype of the special construction -- that is to say, a combination of topic and primary properties that is nonprototypical compared with the overall subject prototype, that of basic sentences. Let us look at passive again for an example:

17. The accident victims were loaded into waiting ambulances and taken to a nearby hospital.

Sentence 17 is perfectly fine when uttered by a news reporter, for whom presumably the accident victims were the most topical, but not when uttered by the ambulance attendant who did the loading. It would be unacceptable in that context for the same reason that 18 has always been considered unacceptable:

18. The accident victims were loaded into waiting ambulances by me.

The unacceptability of both 18 and 17 when uttered by the ambulance

attendant who is the agent, is that the subject of the sentence designates a very deviant topic because the topic in both cases does not match up with the focus of interest (Zubin 1979). Focus of interest is a topic property but here the focus of interest is naturally the speaker, the highest on the egocentric scale (Zubin 1979:478; see also below, section 2.2). A sentence like 19 is even more unacceptable than 18,

19. An accident victim was loaded into a waiting ambulance by me.

because it is hard to conceive that the subject of 19 has any topic properties at all, while the object of the by-phrase is at least the focus of interest. The subject shares with the object of the by-phrase the fact that it is human and so it cannot on that basis alone be chosen as the subject. A sentence like 20, on the other hand,

20. An accident victim was loaded into a waiting ambulance.

is more acceptable than 19 because there is no more topical entity to compete with the subject, and it is human and can be the Representor of the scene -- the entity whose mention evokes the entire scene. It is in such cases that agentivity (or primarihood) might assert itself over topicality, and a speaker might mention the ambulance attendants even though they are not topical because they are agents:

21. Ambulance attendants loaded an accident victim into a waiting ambulance.

A corollary to this theory is that a special construction mentioning subject cannot have as its best example a subject that is

both a prototypical topic and a prototypical primary. For example, when the passive construction is used, the topic and the primary may not overlap. We will see that this corollary is borne out in general in each of the constructions I look at in this dissertation. For now, the following examples are instructive. Sentence 22a is a basic sentence; 22b exhibits the Change-Property-Factoring construction which I discuss in greater detail in section 3.3. Sentence 22c is an abbreviation of the sentence exhibiting the Change-Property-Factoring construction, and so even though it looks syntactically like a basic sentence, its subject deviates from the syntactic prototype for basic sentences because it corresponds to the prototype for subjects of sentences exhibiting the Change-Property-Factoring construction:

- 22a. The price of rice has gone up.
- b. Rice has gone up in price.
- c. Rice has gone up.

The same thing can be shown for the Psychological-Property-Factoring construction, discussed in section 4.3, except that the resultant abbreviated sentence is ambiguous, with one basic-sentence reading and one special-construction reading:

- 23a. Joan's chanting aggravated me.
- b. Joan aggravated me with her chanting.
- c. Joan aggravated me.

The verb aggravate has only one basic case frame: one containing an agent and a patient, and optionally an instrument. But the agent can be a prototypical human agent or a nonprototypical non-human agent. When the agent is a prototypical human then it carries with it the

implication of intentionality on the part of the agent: the agent intended for the predicate to occur. When the agent is a nonprototypical non-human agent, there is no implication of intentionality but the nonprototypical agent is implied to have primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate. Sentence 23a is a basic sentence with a nonprototypical agent. Sentence 23b is ambiguous in that it is both a Psychological-Property-Factoring sentence and a basic agent-patient-instrument sentence. Sentence 23c is also ambiguous, since it can be a normal agent-patient basic sentence, allowed with aggravate, or it can be an abbreviation of a sentence exhibiting the Psychological-Property-Factoring construction. Under the latter reading, the subject is not implied to be a prototypical agent but rather a nonprototypical agent as in 23a. Thus a sentence exhibiting a special construction like Psychological-Property-Factoring is implied not to have a subject which is both a prototypical topic and a prototypical primary.

1.6 Organization of this Dissertation

In Chapter 2 I discuss prototypical topics. In Chapter 3 I discuss three constructions whose function is elucidated under this new view of topic: the (central) existential construction (Lakoff 1984), it-clefts, and the Change-Property-Factoring construction. In chapter 4 I discuss prototypical agents and three constructions whose function is elucidated

under the prototypical view of agents: the Patient-Subject Construction, the Tough-Construction, and the Psychological-Property-Factoring Construction. In Chapter 5 I discuss the uses of the passive, and alternatives to passive. In Chapter 6 I offer conclusions.

NOTES

- ¹ For example, the Port-Royal grammarians (Arnauld and Lancelot 1660:23f.) claim that the subject is "ce dont on affirme" (that about which something is said). Hermann Paul (1889:113) says that "the psychological subject is the group of ideas which is first present in the consciousness of the speaker or thinker" (emphasis mine), and although he claims to wish there to be a clear distinction between "psychological subject" and "grammatical subject," he paraphrases this statement in the very next sentence as "the subject is ... the apprehending portion; the predicate the apprehended." On page 115 he seems to equate subject with old information when he says, "the psychological predicate is always the more strongly accented, as the more important portion of the sentence, and as containing the new matter" (emphasis mine). What is important in this is that Paul sees a definitional relation between subject on the one hand, and aboutness and old information on the other. Sapir (1921:93f.) equates the subject with the "starting point, the 'doer' of the action." Bloomfield (1933:172) says that there are two "favorite sentence-forms," actor-action phrases and commands; one can conclude from this that he is equating subject and actor in at least the favorite (prototypical?) bipartite sentence-form of English. Jespersen (1924:147-150) gives an enumeration of some of the problems encountered by linguists of this period who depend on a unitary semantic definition of subject.

Linguists of other traditions concurrent with transformational grammar also have grappled with questions of the meaning of the category 'subject.' In general, they have concluded either that the English subject is to be defined in terms of discourse parameters such as 'what is being talked about' or 'old information,' or that, although there are correlations between semantic role and subject or between discourse function and subject, the category 'subject' is a grammaticized one because the correlation is never general enough. A progression of thought in this direction is evident in the writings of Prague School linguists. Vilém Mathesius (quoted in Firbas 1966, 1974), the founder of the Prague School, concluded that although English subjects often were the theme (~ topic) of their sentence, English seemed to be guided more by the "grammatical principle" than by considerations of thematicity. By "grammatical principle" I presume is meant considerations of semantic role. Firbas himself concludes (1966:253) that in English, sentences with non-thematic subjects "may not belong to the very centre of the language system" but nevertheless "they are, together with the thematic subjects, fully integrated in it, and cannot be regarded as peripheral phenomena." Here, again, the notion arises that sentences where the subject

conveys the topic are more central (more prototypical?) in the language than sentences where this is not the case. In Sgall, Hajičová and Benešová (1973:150, 183) the English subject does not need to be thematic although this is the unmarked case; and it is also the unmarked case for subjects to be either the "actor" of the action expressed by the predicate or the "bearer" of the state or attitude (cf. Pala 1974:197) expressed by the predicate. In other words, the category subject cannot be defined by such properties though there is a statistical correlation; the category subject seems to the authors to be a grammatical one (though it must be said that they do not exhibit much interest in the issue). Within tagmemic theory, Pike (1967:196) does not give subject a unified definition, saying different occurrences belong to different "tagmemes" (roughly, form-meaning correlations) such as "actor-as-subject-of-sentence" or "recipient-of-action-as-subject-of-sentence," as in John went home or John was hit in the eye, respectively; Longacre (1976), on the other hand, defines subject in discourse terms: "Subject is what we are talking about. It is often equivalent to old information. ... Furthermore, part of the meaning of surface structure categories is the sum total of the deep structure categories that they are able to encode. Thus, subject comes to mean something on the order of 'that which we are talking about' or old information partly because it encodes so many varying and different deep structure [semantic] relations" (1976:287). Halliday, like Sgall, Hajičová and Benešová, sees only statistical correlations between subject on the one hand and semantic or discourse considerations on the other: "The subject may be actor, goal, beneficiary or range. ... In thematization, the subject may be (included within) theme or rheme; ... if we restrict the discussion to declarative clauses the unmarked option has the subject 'as theme' (1967:215). Again, there are correlations between subject and semantic role or discourse function, but subject is essentially a grammatical category. Besides Mathesius, the only researchers that I am aware of who have defined the English subject more in terms of semantic role than discourse function (but certainly not exclusively; on the contrary) are Bates and MacWhinney, who say (1982:204), "English merges agent and topic in most cases, capitalizing on the role of perspective in creating a statistical overlap between these two categories. When the overlap does break down, agency is more likely to dominate in assignment of subjectivization." As we shall see below, Bates and MacWhinney are focusing in this conclusion on the set of English basic sentences, whereas those who define subject in terms of discourse functions are basing their conclusion on the existence of a large number of special constructions that vary the correlation between topic and semantic role.

2 See, for example, Chomsky 1965:163, 221. Johnson 1974 has a full discussion of this point. That this is still the point of view in current developments from transformational grammar can be seen by Chomsky 1981:42, 128ff.

3 Originally, this tenet was intended to deny the validity of such notions as "word order, phrase structure configurations, or case marking" (Perlmutter 1980:197) in the definition of grammatical

relations, but it has now been used to rule out semantic and pragmatic factors as well. Thus Perlmutter says (1980:202f.) of grammatical constructions, which are defined in terms of grammatical relations:

Conceiving of grammatical constructions in terms of grammatical relations has led to the discovery that there is a relatively small class of constructions that reappear in languages differing in word order and case marking patterns. [...] The detailed study of individual languages reveals that a particular construction in a given language [...] may be linked in individual languages with semantic, pragmatic, or presuppositional effects, with constraints on definiteness or specificity of reference of nominals, with the organization of the sentence into old and new information, and so on. The general strategy of [Relational Grammar] in all such cases is to separate the syntactic nature of a particular construction from the semantic, pragmatic, etc., factors with which it interacts. This goes along with the claim that the syntactic constructions utilized by particular languages are characterizable in syntactic terms independently of the semantic, pragmatic, discourse, etc. conditions under which they will be used in one language or another.

If the grammatical constructions are characterizable without reference to "semantic, pragmatic, discourse, etc." conditions this must mean that the grammatical relations which make up the constructions must be so too; otherwise the semantic, pragmatic and discourse conditions on the grammatical relations would be transferred to the construction containing them.

- 4 See, besides the references in footnote 1, Halliday 1969:169; Fillmore 1968; Keenan 1976; Van Valin and Foley 1980:339, 348.
- 5 Foley and Van Valin do not deny that there may be language-specific grammatical categories called 'subject' in specific languages. For example, in Van Valin and Foley (1980:348) they say,

Although we do not make use of "subject" and "object" as theoretical constructs, we do not deny that languages have subjects and objects -- but it should be kept in mind that we are using these terms here as labels for language-specific grammatical categories. Thus for example what we call the subject in English is a particular conflation of [semantic] role and pragmatic [discourse] structures not found in many other languages.

But as far as I can make out, the term 'subject' in a role-and-reference description of a language is only a shorthand for the particular conflation of semantic and discourse properties applicable to the category 'subject' in that language: in other words, the category can be defined totally in terms of semantic or discourse notions. Earlier in the quoted article, for example, Van Valin and Foley equate the English subject with the "Pragmatic Peak": the

pragmatically most salient NP in a clause.

6 See Rosch (1977) for nouns, Lindner (1981) for verbal particles, and Brugman (1981) for prepositions. Rosch did not set up her experiments and research as a study of nouns (natural-language objects) but as a study of real-world objects. Since, however, the experimental subjects were to respond to instructions in English (Is this a picture of a bird? etc.), in fact the experimental subjects were giving information about their knowledge of the English language as well as about their categorization of the real world.

7 Bates and MacWhinney (1982:214) "propose that grammatical categories may also be organized around prototypic members." My research corroborates this hypothesis and fleshes it out.

8 This is a very careful laying out of the state of affairs without confusing the use of words and the mention of words. In this dissertation I will not always be so careful. When such a careful expression results in a cumbersome sentence, I will sometimes, when nothing hinges on the distinction, mention an entity when I mean the word referring to the entity, and vice versa. An extreme (and unnecessary) example of such a confusion would be to say that in sentence 2c,

2c. John hit the ball.

John is the subject of the sentence, when in actual fact John is.

Chapter 2

Prototypical Topics

No matter what language community a child is born into, the reasons why the child learns to speak and the uses to which it puts language are, one may assume, in broad outline the same[1]. For example, when a child is just learning to speak, the following is a natural clustering of attributes of a speech situation in which it might find itself: in the presence of a hearer,

- the child wishes to speak about something
- what the child wishes to speak about is something the child is attending to; it is the focus of the child's attention
- it is present in his or her immediate environment at that moment
- it is concrete and visible
- it is salient in the child's perception of its environment
- it is something the child is interested in
- it has also been made to be the focus of the hearer's attention
- it ipso facto has already been introduced into the hearer's consciousness
- this focus of the child's attention is the entity which is the important element in the child's view of the event -- it is the entity from whose perspective the child views the event.

An example is seen in the following exchange (from Ochs Keenan and Schieffelin 1976:340f.):

1. Allison IV, 22 months
 - a. Allison: (looks in box, finding calf) cow/
 - b. Mother: A cow!
 - c. Allison: (holding calf) moo/↑
 - d. Mother: Moo, cow says moo.

In such an exchange, the child usually either is confident that the hearer is attending to the box and to what is in it or has first secured the attention of the hearer on the box (ibid.:355), either verbally or with gestures. In this exchange, the calf is present, concrete and visible, and is the element from whose perspective the child is viewing the event, in the sense that the calf is the most important element in the event about which the child is speaking (see also Fillmore 1977:60f.).

In this chapter I will argue that this clustering of concepts is universally the prototype for what we mean by the topic of a discourse or utterance. For adults as well as for children, the clustering of most if not all of the above characteristics is more natural than a lack of such a clustering. Many acute observers have discussed one or more of these concepts as attributes of topics[2], and have made cogent observations about the relation between topichood and one or more of these attributes. But the work was only partial: like the blind men with the elephant, they did not capture the whole truth about the nature of topics. With a prototypical view of topic, all these attributes are combined into one definition of topic; any contradictions between correct but partial definitions are removed; and the relations between them can be studied. When all these attributes do not cluster in a certain entity, languages have recourse to less usual, more marked syntactic constructions, and there are constructions whose job it is to separate out elements from this clustering of attributes when not all of them hold. We will see some examples of this in Chapter 3 and throughout this dissertation.

In this chapter I will also explore the relation between topics on the one hand and formal aspects of languages, specifically subjecthood and initial position in the sentence, on the other. Many researchers have noted correlations between them. There is, however, a problem with having these formal characteristics be part of the universal prototype for topics, because of difficulty with the notion that there may be universal prototypes for syntactic constructions, as I will discuss in Section 2.3. Although there are many implicational universals, there are not many -- if any -- absolute ones. For example, there is a difficulty with claiming that topichood invariably has something to do with subjecthood and initial position in the sentence, given the existence of both VSO and SVO languages. It would be hard to claim that speakers of a VSO language consistently have verbal topics and speakers of an SVO language consistently have nominal topics. Nevertheless, the notion that there may be correlations between topichood, on the one hand, and subjecthood and initial position, on the other, bears looking into: there are too many regularities across languages to be ignored, in spite of such deep-seated differences like that between VSO and SVO languages -- though there are also embarrassing exceptions. In any case, the language-particular topic prototype for English has both subjecthood and initial position as properties, as I will explore below.

In this chapter I will also argue that there are different types of topics analogous to the different levels of natural categories (Rosch 1977, 1978), namely that there are superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics. The distinction I propose here is different from

that between sentence topics and discourse topics[3]. Discourse topics are schemata or scenes evoked in a discourse which are relevant at the point of the discourse in question. No particular word or expression in the sentence may refer explicitly to such a schema or scene (though it may), but the schema or scene may, nevertheless, be necessary to fully understand the sentence. For example, the sentence

2. Joan waved her arms wildly, and finally Horace saw her.

would have a different interpretation and engender different expectations depending on whether an airport-meeting scene had been evoked (was a discourse topic) or a restaurant scene. A sentence topic, by definition, actually occurs as a word or a phrase in a sentence[4]. It is the link in the sentence to one of the discourse topics: it is the Representor of that discourse topic in the sentence (see below for a fuller discussion of the notion of 'Representor'). For example, in the sentence above, Joan might be the Representor of an airport (or restaurant) meeting scene. (It is impossible to say for sure what the sentence topic of a sentence is without context.)

By recognizing discourse topics one is able to understand how there can be a succession of different sentence topics in a discourse which remains "on topic." The discourse topic is, as it were, the umbrella which unifies the different sentence topics. Similarly, there can be layers of discourse topics. Each higher discourse topic regulates the succession of the discourse topics in the next lower level in a discourse which remains on topic.

Whereas discourse and sentence topics are topics (of different levels) actually occurring in a discourse, superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics are a categorization of topics. Basic-level topics are similar to the (naturally-occurring) "basic-level objects" discussed by Rosch et al. (1979), and pick out participants in discourse topics. Superordinate topics are larger sections of discourse topics or entire discourse topics. Subordinate topics are aspects or parts of basic-level topics. For example, in 3, if they are sentence topics, this whole endeavor, John and her handwriting

- 3a. This whole endeavor has been a mistake from beginning to end.
- b. John is building a fire.
- c. Her handwriting is atrocious.

are probably superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics respectively -- though the actual identification of topics as superordinate, basic-level and subordinate would depend on the operative discourse topic(s), and the actual identification of sentence topics as such cannot be made with absolute certainty without context. Distinguishing between discourse or sentence topics on the one hand and superordinate, basic-level or subordinate topics on the other hand, enables one to see the interplay between discourse and sentence topics: how a discourse topic can become a sentence topic and then move back up to resume its status as a discourse topic. Further, distinguishing between superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics makes it possible to describe one more way in which sentence topics can change while the discourse remains coherent. Not only can one change basic-level topics within one superordinate topic, but one can also

switch from the basic level to the subordinate level (as well as to the superordinate level) and back again.

In Section 2.1 I will discuss the layering of topics and the relation between on the one hand superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics, and on the other hand discourse and sentence topics. In Section 2.2 I will discuss the structure of prototypical topics and the semantic correlates of the pragmatic attributes of topics. I will also discuss the difference between what Li and Thompson (1976) have called subject-prominent and topic-prominent languages in the terms proposed here. In Section 2.3 the syntactic reflexes of topics will be discussed: the possibility of there being syntactic characteristics like initial position and subjecthood in the universal prototype for topic. In Chapter 3 I will discuss and compare two of the many ways that English has of dealing with nonprototypical topics, namely existential sentences and it-clefts. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the uses of the Passive voice, another way of coding nonprototypical topics.

2.1 The Layering of Topics

Consider the following sentence:

4. Your cup is on the table.

Imagine that the hearer is having tea at the speaker's home. The cup in question is then probably the teacup that the speaker has designated for

the hearer's use for the duration of the visit. Speakers of English and members of the English/North American culture (at least) have a cognitive schema[5] for this kind of situation, which I will call the tea-party schema[6]. Topics for a discourse where 4 might be used are concerns like the location of the hearer's cup, getting tea, enjoying oneself, being sociable and polite, etc.[7] The sentence topic of 4 picks a salient entity from the given actualized schema, or scene, in "your cup," and alludes to another with "your."

By "a discourse topic of a text" I mean a schema or scene previously evoked in the discourse and which is still "relevant."

Discourse topics are of the following types:

- cognitive schemata and parts of cognitive schemata;
- actualized scenes or parts of actualized scenes (see note 5);
- evaluations or opinions about schemata or scenes that are operative at the point in discourse under consideration[8];
- generalizations on a set of schemata or scenes which includes one or more of the schemata or scenes which are discourse topic(s) at the point in discourse under consideration[8];
- examples of relevant schemata, scenes, evaluations or generalizations.

Discourse topics are layered: each higher discourse topic has the next lower discourse topic as a part or as an example, or is an evaluation or generalization of the next lower discourse topic. In the above example, the cognitive schema is the tea-party schema, by which a certain set of expectations and judgments is aroused in the participants in the actualized tea-party scene. Any element of this discourse topic can be focused on and become the sentence topic, although because of human beings' "egocentric bias" (Zubin 1979) the human participants in the scene (actualized schema) are the most likely to become sentence topic.

Nevertheless, other important or less important elements in the scene, such as the teacup in 2 above (with its relation to the person designated to use the teacup), can also become sentence topic. A sentence topic is, as it were, the linguistic reflex of the lowest-level topic there is at a given point in a discourse and ranges only over the sentence it is in (though successive sentences may have identical sentence topics, of course, as we will see in the narrative in 9-11 below).

By sentence topic I mean a constituent inside a sentence which most directly evokes the discourse topic which is relevant in the current sentence. This is the status of your cup in 4 above. I am assuming, for the sake of simplicity, that every sentence has a sentence topic except for those in which a sentence topic is being introduced, for example in an existential-there construction as in 5:

5. There is even a garden.

In most cases it is true that there is one entity in a sentence that can be designated the sentence topic.

The division of topics into superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics is a categorization of topics. Cognitive schemata, actualized scenes, generalizations and evaluations are types of superordinate topics. Individual participants or elements inside the schema or scene are basic-level topics. Major participants inside the schema or scene are more prototypical basic-level topics than minor participants, since the major participants are more salient in the

schema or scene than the minor participants, and since salience is an aspect of the prototypical topic. Human beings are, to other human beings, the most salient participants in a schema or scene and as such are the most prototypical basic-level topics. For example, in the tea-party schema, the human participants are the most salient, and participants like cups and saucers, cake or a tablecloth are less salient participants and so make less prototypical basic-level topics. In 4, repeated here,

4. Your cup is on the table.

the sentence topic is thus a less prototypical basic-level topic, but its prototypicality is helped by the fact that its relation to a more salient, major participant is made clear at the same time.

Subordinate topics are an aspect or part of the basic-level topic. In the example above, the discourse topics are superordinate topics. The guest and the teacup are basic-level topics (more and less prototypical basic-level topics, respectively). Other possible basic-level topics are the host, other guests, and other accoutrements of the tea-party schema or scene. Subordinate topics in the example above are the guests' appearance and clothing, the handle of the teacup, etc.[9] For example, the sentence topic of 6b is a subordinate topic:

- 6a. I can't use that cup.
- b. The handle's broken.

Further examples of subordinate topics are found in 7b,c,d:

- 7a. When John came to the tea-party, he was a mess.

- b. His shirttails were hanging out,
- c. his hair had engine oil in it,
- d. and his pants were ripped.

When the sentence topic moves from John to his shirttails, the move is from a basic-level to a subordinate topic. One could say that the topic in the two subsequent clauses remains the same, but that is oversimplifying and glossing over distinctions. In fact, John and his shirttails are not the same. The fact is that the subordinate topic is an aspect or part of the basic-level topic and it is possible, under certain conditions, to move from a basic-level topic to a subordinate topic which is an aspect or part of the basic-level topic without loss of coherence. When the sentence topic is a subordinate topic as in 7b,c,d, then the lowest discourse topic -- here, John -- is a basic-level topic.

Note also the relation of the subordinate clause in 7a to the discourse topic(s). The subordinate clause refers to John's arrival, which is a part of the discourse-topic scene of the tea-party. This arrival is a discourse topic: a discourse topic can be a scene or a part of a scene. In addition, the entire scene, another discourse topic, is alluded to via the object of the preposition: the tea party. (The sentence topic of the whole sentence is also present in the subordinate clause in the subject John.) We will have more occasion below, in Section 2.2, to speak of the relation of subordinate elements in sentences, such as subordinate clauses, to the discourse and sentence topics.

Superordinate topics can become sentence topics. However, they

are not prototypical sentence topics. The prototypical sentence topic is a basic-level topic -- and specifically a prototypical basic-level topic, namely, a human participant in a discourse-topic schema or scene -- and is found primarily in narratives, in stories with human participants or participants treated as human -- agents, experiencers, etc. Narratives are ubiquitous in oral speech, even in speech which is not primarily narrative or interested in telling a story. In non-narrative discourse, however, sentence topics are less frequently of the prototypical type. In evaluatory or philosophical settings in everyday speech, one finds more superordinate topics, encapsulated into pronouns without precise antecedents (Gensler 1977), or into nominalizations or other abstract nouns, or into complex noun phrases. (We will see an example directly below.) So sentence topics can be superordinate, basic-level or subordinate.

A discourse topic which is a superordinate topic is usually represented in the sentence by its Representor. A Representor is a participant in the discourse-topic schema or scene which is used to evoke the entire discourse topic[10]. In this way the sentence topic is a basic-level topic while able to evoke an entire discourse topic which is a superordinate topic. An example of a Representor, as well as an example of superordinate topics at the sentence level, is found in the following passage from the Judiciary-Committee version of the Watergate Tapes(Rodino 1974:4):

8. President: (a) Goldwater put it in context, he said "Well, for Christ's sake, everybody bugs everybody else. We know that."
Dean: (b) That was, that was priceless.

Haldeman: (c) Yeah.
(d) I bugged--
President: (e) Well, it's true.
(f) It happens to be totally true.

One of the discourse topics of the section that this fragment is in is the Watergate-bugging scene, including the Watergate hearings, and an evaluation about this scene, something like "All the ruckus about these buggings is ridiculous." A higher-level discourse topic, a macro-scene, of which the Watergate-bugging scene is a part, is the Washington-government scene. Another scene inside this macro-scene is President Nixon's presidency. This is then a possible discourse topic. Relevant schemata, and thus further discourse topics at this point, are the American government and the presidency. The Watergate-bugging scene matches part of a schema of government officials' illegal activities, and perhaps part of a schema of the American government, if our schema of the American government includes the evaluation that it is corrupt. Possible discourse topics are evaluations of any of the relevant scenes or schemata.

In 8, these are the discourse topics. In 8a, It refers to the Watergate buggings and the attendant upset; it is the sentence topic. A schema which is a discourse topic at this point is that of government officials' illegal activities, specifically their bugging operations. An evaluation on this schema is, as mentioned, something like "All the ruckus about these buggings is ridiculous." Goldwater, the subject of this sentence, is not the sentence topic but the locus or Representor of an example of this evaluation on the schema of government officials' illegal activities. The example is then the scene of Goldwater saying

something to the same effect: "Everybody bugs everybody else." The evaluation and the schema are discourse topics at this point since they have been evoked earlier. The example is just mentioned at this point, so it is not (yet) a discourse topic though it has become one by Dean's very next utterance 8b: that refers to this discourse topic. That Goldwater becomes the Representor of this example has to do with the fact that a human being or an agent is, for humans with their egocentric bias, the most salient part of a scene and so becomes the entity that is mentioned in order to bring the whole scene into consciousness (cf. Zubin 1979). This example of Goldwater's opinion is only just being brought into the hearers' consciousness here; it has not been mentioned before. In spoken language (at least in English) it is rare that a topic is introduced in a position in the sentence usually reserved for topics (see also Lambrecht 1982). So Goldwater is not the sentence topic but the Representor for this new example. Thus the two nominal elements available for sentence topic are the Representor of this new example and an already-existing discourse topic. The discourse topic, a superordinate topic, is then brought down to sentence-topic level in the form of the pronoun it. But Goldwater is the most agentive element available and becomes the subject.

So in 8a the sentence topic it is a superordinate topic. This pronoun refers to something which was earlier a discourse topic (and not (also) represented by a sentence topic) and which later will become one again. In 8b exactly the same thing happens. The scene of Goldwater offering an opinion on bugging has been mentioned and can become a discourse topic and can be represented by a sentence topic, which it

does, referred to by the demonstrative that. In 8c and 8d Haldeman begins to offer an example of (the truth of) Goldwater's evaluation, with himself as the salient entity, the Representor. Because of the egocentric bias, speaker (and hearer) can always become sentence topic, at least in English (see also Zubin 1979:500). In 8e and 8f, the president is still on the superordinate level, with it referring to the superordinate-level notion "Everybody bugs everybody else," an evaluation on the schema of government officials' illegal activities[11].

In example 8, then, the sentence topic is a superordinate topic three times, whereas the sentence topic is a basic-level topic only once. It is in narratives, and specifically in the sections of the narrative that are concerned with the actual recounting of events, that sentence topics are basic-level topics most frequently. Labov (1972) has analyzed the structure of oral narrative as potentially including, in addition to the actual recounting of the events, an abstract -- a summary of the whole story -- and an orientation, one or more evaluations, and a coda. Most superordinate sentence topics occur at the points of evaluation and orientation and at the coda.

The following (from a personal tape recording) is an example of a narrative in which all sentence topics are basic-level topics, except at points of orientation, evaluation and coda. The story concerns a periodontist, his dental assistant, named Joan, and a patient. Example 9 gives the beginning of the narrative: the orientation. The boldface sentences are the orientation. In spite of syntactic messiness, the

sentence topics emerge as being the way he treats her and the last thing that happened. Right after that the speaker launches into her story and the sentence topics become basic-level topics: the periodontist.

9. J. [...] he was- ... quite attractive but-
 from what Joan tells me...
 You know from the stories she tells me about how he is
 as a boss
 he's- he's got his real creepy side too.
 G. What's creepy mean.
 J. Well I mean the way he treats he::r
 I mean I- you know I could-
 the last thing that happened for example
 he went out for lunch...
 and he was supposed to be back at one,
 and he had two patients [...]

Periodically there are points of evaluation in the narrative.

Example 10 contains two of them (in boldface), and it is at these points only that we have sentence topics which are other than the human protagonists in the story; further, every time but once in the narrative proper the sentence topic is one of the three main protagonists:

10. J. So hé was supposed to be in by one o'clock.
 =And she thought We::ll, they'd left a little late
 so he should be in by one-thirty.
 Hé came back..at...(0.7)
 And then he had a::: (1.0)
 Then he had a operation at two o'clock.
 And this guy was réa::lly nervous.
 He wasn't back at two,
 Two-twenty, this guy.. u:h, goes Well I've been waiting
 for twenty minutes and I'm leaving.
 And I'll co- come back later...u:h to make another
 appointment.
 =But I think this is awful.
 A::nd- you know they were saying o::h ple- you know,
 the doctor will be in shortly, blah blah.
 And the reason Joan hadn't put him in the cháir was
 because- at two,
 was because he was really nervous
 and she was a- in there -sharpening instruments.

hhhhhhhhh heh heh heh heh
 And..she was ^súre that he would be ^léss nervous in the
 wáiting room...you know reading a magazine
 than- sitting in a cháir with- you know all this
 -unfamiliar stuff
 and [listening to her sharpening instruments.
 G. [mhm
 J. So, .. that made a lot of sense.
 =So,...twenty:...well áfter two-thirty.
 Her boss came back.

The boldface sections are the points of evaluation in the narrative.
 Each time the sentence topic is something other than one or more of the
 human protagonists in the story: once a reason, and once an evaluation.

At the end of the story, at the coda, superordinate sentence
 topics come up again. From 10, the story continues with the
 periodontist blaming the dental assistant for being late and then being
 "real creepy" to her for the rest of the afternoon. Then:

11. J. so he was réal creepy áll day
 and then at the énd of the day when éverybody was gone,
 ... u::m .. he went- up to Joan and apologized.
 Réally- réally- chéap apology. (0.8)
 Sure it's easy- to say I'm sorry. (1.0)
 You know that's real chéap.

The boldface sentences are the coda and have superordinate sentence
 topics: an evaluation of the apology scene between periodontist and
 assistant. The other sentences all have basic-level sentence topics.

It is remarkable in this narrative how consistently non-basic-
 level sentence topics come up only at points of evaluation. (There was
 only one arguably non-basic-level sentence topic in the parts of the
 narrative not presented in 9-11, and that also at a point of
 evaluation.) But judging from other narratives presented in the

literature, it is not at all unique in this way. Up until now, theories about topichood have been tested almost exclusively using narratives, and then mostly with the part of the narrative dealing with the actual events. This has made it seem as if most sentence topics are basic-level topics and has made it impossible to consider the interplay between basic-level and superordinate topics at the sentence level, as well as the interplay between sentence and discourse topics.

But even though a superordinate sentence topic comes up frequently in certain positions in a discourse, some of which are quite well-defined, this type of topic is not prototypical. For example, it seems to be something which is learned later. Labov (1972) argues that the ability to use increasingly complex evaluatory comments improves with age and varies with the cultural environment, and facility in the use of superordinate topics as sentence topics is no doubt correlated with facility in the use of evaluatory comments, since the former are greatly used in the expression of the latter.

In other words, up until now, people have concentrated mostly on the most prototypical type of topics -- basic-level topics. This is, incidentally, a bit of weak evidence that basic-level topics are indeed the most prototypical.

Discourse and sentence topics are then a different kind of notion than what I mean by superordinate, basic-level and subordinate topics. The former are a designation of topics with regard to their role in a discourse, whereas the latter are a categorization into types of topics regardless of how they are used. The advantage of categorizing topics

into superordinate, basic-level and subordinate ones is that it gives us a better understanding of the structure of discourse on the one hand, with its recounting and its evaluatory sections, and the progression of topics in a discourse on the other hand, by enabling us to talk about the interplay between these three. It also enables one to see the interplay between discourse and sentence topics: how a discourse topic can become a sentence topic and then move back up to resume its status as a discourse topic.

2.2 Prototypical Topics

In the introduction to this chapter I suggested that the characteristics of prototypical topics clustered naturally: what a person speaks about is the focus of the speaker's attention and of the hearer's attention and thus in their consciousness; it is something that the speaker is interested in and that is the perspective from which the speaker is viewing the event; it is present in the immediate environment, concrete and visible; and it is salient in the speaker's perception of the event.

Prototypes tend to have a small set of attributes which are necessary conditions for membership in the category, along with a number of other characteristics which are neither necessary nor sufficient but which in the simplest case cluster with the necessary conditions. Prototypical topics are no exception. With prototypical topics, the necessary attribute is aboutness; and being in the speaker's consciousness and the focus of the speaker's attention are natural

consequences of what it means for someone to say something about something else[12]. The other attributes are not necessary conditions for topichood. Thus the entity referred to by the topic does not have to be the hearer's focus of attention or even in the hearer's consciousness. Nor does the entity have to be in speaker's and hearer's immediate presence; nor does it have to be concrete: as we saw in Section 2, discourse topics tend not to be concrete but tend to be superordinate topics, that is, semantic networks like schemata or scenes, or evaluations or generalizations on schemata or scenes. And a topic does not have to be the entity from whose perspective the speaker views the event or state, though this attribute clusters with the necessary conditions for topichood more consistently than the others do (cf. Kuno 1975, 1976).

These pragmatic notions involved in the characterization of prototypical topics have semantic reflexes. Semantic notions often associated with topichood are in the first place, referentiality and definiteness (Li and Thompson 1976; Schachter 1977; Chafe 1976), and in the second place, agency (Hawkinson and Hyman 1974; MacWhinney 1977; Bates and MacWhinney 1982). In the third place, the above description of a prototypical topic implies that the prototypical topic is a basic-level topic.

We will consider these derivative characteristics of prototypical topics in turn. Let us first look at agency as a reflex of the discourse characteristics of prototypical topics. The correlation of agency with topichood is related to what Zubin (1979:476) calls

speakers' normal "focus of interest," which is as much like themselves as possible (their egocentric bias). This makes human beings the most likely thing human beings would want to talk about. We saw in the narrative presented in 7-9 that indeed, most of the sentence topics are human beings. Further, among human beings agents are cognitively salient to humans, and as such more likely to be things that the speaker will want to speak about. So the relation of agency to topichood is based on humans' predilection for concerning themselves with, and thus for speaking about, entities as much like themselves as possible.

As a reflex of the fact that the prototypical topic is concrete and visible, the prototypical topic is also referential, and as a reflex of the fact that the prototypical topic is the focus of both the speaker's and the hearer's attention, it is definite. It is clear, of course, that much adult discourse is about entities that are not in the immediate presence of the speakers. However, this does not alter the fact that prototypically, a topic is in the immediate environment of the speaker. Because of similarity to the prototypical topic (due to human beings' ability to visualize what is absent), something absent can easily become a topic.

The prototypical topic is a basic-level topic. Quine (1960) has struggled, in a behavioristic framework, with the reason why a foreigner in a new country understands the natives to mean, by a word gavagai, a rabbit and not an "undetached rabbit part." It is because human beings tend to focus on entities at the basic level, whether the actual entity that is being referred to by it is larger or smaller than the basic

level. We saw in example 8 (page 39 above) that Nixon refers to Goldwater in order to evoke the scene of Goldwater's opinion on bugging. When Haldeman, in 6c-d, wants to offer an example of the truth of Goldwater's statement, he moves right down to the Representor of the example: I in 6d[13]. And we saw that in the narrative presented in 7-9 most of the sentence topics were basic-level topics, except in the evaluatory and orientation parts of the narrative.

2.2.1 Prototypical Topics and Representors

Examples of Representors being used to evoke entire schemata, scenes or examples are all over. The passage below offers a very obvious example, from the Judiciary-Committee transcript shortly after the passage quoted in 6. In 12a-c the President forcibly changes the subject from "how to fight back against those who are raising such a ruckus about buggings" to another embarrassing situation for the White House on which he wants action, referred to via "the little red box":

12. P: (a) It isn't worth it.
 (b) It isn't worth it, damn it.
 (c) It isn't worth-- the hell with it.
 (d) What is the situation on your, uh, on the, on the little red box?
 (e) Did they find what the hell that, that is?
 (f) Have they found the box yet?
 D: (g) Gray has never had access to the box.
 (h) He is just now going to pursue the box.
 (i) I spoke with him just, just about, uh, oh, thirty minutes ago
 (j) and Pat said, "I don't know about the box."
 (k) Uh, don't know where it is now.
 (l) We never had an opportunity before, when it was first, uh, released in the press there was a box,

- to go in.
- (m) But," he said, "I think we have grounds now to go in and find out what it's all about."
- H: (n) The last public story was that she handed it over to Edward Bennett Williams.
- D: (o) That's right.
- P: (p) Perhaps the Bureau ought to go over--
- H: (q) The Bureau ought to go into Edward Bennett Williams (r) and let's start questioning that son-of-a-bitch. (s) Keep him tied up for a couple of weeks.
- P: (t) Yeah, I hope they do.
- (u) They-- The Bureau better get over pretty quick and get that red box.
- (v) We want it cleared up. [Unintelligible]
- D: (w) That's exactly the way I, I gave it to Gray.
- (x) I, uh, uh--
- P: (y) We want it cleared up.
- (z) We want to get to the bottom of it.
- (aa) If anybody is guilty over here we want to know.

Nixon refers to this situation throughout by its Representor, the little red box. That this basic-level object has evoked an entire scene is shown by the fact that Nixon can bring the scene, a discourse topic, down to the sentence-topic level with the pronoun it in 12v,y,z without previously referring to the scene in any other way than via the little red box. (Those of us who don't know the scene of which the little red box is the Representor must remain in the dark, but it is obvious that Dean and Haldeman know what the President is referring to.)

Interestingly, in 12m it is unclear whether the pronoun it refers to the whole scene or to its Representor, and it doesn't matter, because the Representor is used to refer to the whole scene. Also, it is only because the little red box evokes a whole scene that hearers have no problem fixing on a referent for they in 12e,f, as shown by Dean's response in 12g.

Sentence 12g also shows, incidentally, that Gray, the acting director of the F.B.I., is its Representor. Previous to this Nixon had

alluded to the F.B.I. using they in 12e,f, but Dean begins speaking directly of Gray in 12g, without contrastive stress being necessary to distinguish Gray from other possible members of the set referred to by they in 12e,f.

2.2.2 Representors and Syntactic Topics

By 'syntactic topic,' I mean a non-vocative noun phrase that does not bear any selectional relation to the verb of its clause. The syntactic topics in topic-prominent languages like Chinese, Japanese or Korean are frequently the Representors of the discourse topics to which they allude. The following examples are taken from Li and Thompson 1976:462, 468:

- 13a. Nèi - chang huǒ xìngkui xiāofang-duì láiide
 that-classifier fire fortunately fire-brigade come
 kuài. (Chinese)
 quick
 "That fire (topic), fortunately the fire-brigade came quickly."
- b. Sakana wa tai ga oisii. (Japanese)
 fish top. red snapper subj. delicious
 "Fish (topic), red snapper is delicious."
- c. Pihengki - nān 747 - ka khǎ ta. (Korean)
 airplane - top. -subj. big-stative
 "Airplanes (topic), the 747 is big."

In 13a the topic nèichang huǒ evokes the entire scene of the fire; the subject xiāofang-duì picks out the part of the scene that is going to be talked about in the sentence. In 13b, the topic sakana evokes the fish-eating schema, and the subject tai picks out the particular food

fish that is going to be talked about in this sentence. Similarly for 13c: the topic pāhengki evokes the discourse topic of airplanes and flying; the subject 747 picks out the particular (type of) airplane. This point of view comes very close to what Chafe has suggested (1976:50) about Chinese topics in particular when he said that they "set a spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the main predication holds." The syntactic topic does this by evoking the scene or schema in which the rest of the sentence holds. Since the subject in these sentences has topic properties, ranging over the sentence only, these subjects are the sentence topics of their sentence, according to the characteristics of sentence topics given on page 36: namely, that the sentence topic is the lowest-level topic there is at a given point in a discourse, and ranges only over the sentence it is in.

In spoken English, a type of syntactic topic similar to those in 13 also occurs. Example 14 comes from a personal tape recording; 14d contains a syntactic topic (in boldface):

- 14a. G: (a) [...] we were there about twenty-five to eight, .hh
 (b) and any normal movie woulda been just fine,
 (c) we woulda been able to get in.
 (d) But **Star Trek** the line was already a:::ll the way
 around the corner, .hh
 (e) so I said forget it, [...]

Star Trek in 14d can be considered a syntactic topic, since it has no syntactic or selectional relationship with the rest of the sentence. Mention of this name evokes the scene of going to see Star Trek -- here for purposes of contrast with "any other movie" -- and the rest of the sentence says something about this scene.

Being the Representor of a discourse topic is not the only use to which topics in topic-prominent languages can be put. Another use, for example, is to name a basic-level topic when the subject is a subordinate-level topic, as in the Chinese sentence in 15 (from Li and Thompson 1976:468):

15. Nèike shù yèzi dà.
 that tree leaves big
 "That tree (topic), the leaves are big."

Although Li and Thompson do not speak about the role of such a sentence in a discourse, I surmise that neike shu is a basic-level discourse topic, just as in 7 (page 37), repeated here,

- 7a. When John came to the tea-party, he was a mess.
 b. His shirttails were hanging out,
 c. his hair had engine oil in it,
 d. and his pants were ripped.

where John is the lowest discourse topic in 5b,c,d.

It will be useful to notice what this says about the overt treatment of discourse topics in subject-prominent languages. When one translates 14d into standard written English, a "syntactic topic" like Star Trek will most likely be incorporated into a phrase or a subordinate clause, with contrastive stress on Star Trek because the mention of the discourse topic is to return the hearer to it after a tangent and to contrast it with the tangent, as in 16:

16. But when we got to where Star Trek was showing, the line was already all the way around the corner.

Similarly, if 13a-c were translated into English, the syntactic topics

would probably be incorporated into a phrase or subordinate clause (the form of the phrase or clause will depend on the context). This indicates that the linguistic manifestation of a discourse topic can occur in English sentences in embedded, presupposed form[14].

A clear example of this is found in 17, from the Judiciary-Committee transcripts (Rodino 1974:4). Dean is talking about the Watergate-bugging investigation in this passage, which comes shortly before the one presented in 8 (page 39):

17. D: (a) The resources that have been put against this whole investigation to date are really incredible.
(b) It's truly a, it's truly a larger investigation than was conducted against, uh, the after inquiry of the JFK assassination.

In 17a this whole investigation, embedded in a subordinate clause, evokes the discourse topic which has been implicit until that point, and the subject the resources evokes the aspect of the discourse topic about which Dean offers his evaluation. The presence of this discourse topic in the sentence does not negate the fact that the resources is still the sentence topic, just as in 14d the presence of Star Trek in the sentence does not negate the validity of the line as sentence topic.

As a result, we will have to modify the prevailing notion that there can be only one topic at a time in a sentence. Discourse and sentence topics occur layered, with each higher topic subsuming each lower one as a part or as an example, and it seems that topics of more than one level can be mentioned at one time in a sentence, as long as the higher-level topic subsumes the lower-level topic as a part or as an

This analysis can be extended to the examples from the topic-prominent languages. In 13a, the syntactic topic nèichang huǒ 'evokes a fire scene which subsumes xiǎofang-duì 'the fire brigade' as a part. In 13b, the syntactic topic sakana 'fish' evokes the fish-eating schema which subsumes tai 'red snapper' as an example of a part; and similarly for 13c. In 15, the topic nèike shù 'that tree' subsumes the subject yèzi 'leaves' as a part.

I suggest that in the topic-prominent languages of the type exemplified in 13 and 15 it is also the case that in spite of the presence of a syntactic topic in the sentence another element in the sentence can also have topical properties. In the four examples looked at here, it is the subject which has topical properties, but I do not wish to suggest that this always has to be the case; nor do I wish to suggest that there must always be another topical element in the sentence. In the Chinese examples in 18 (from Li and Thompson 1976:479), for example, the rest of the sentence is (most likely) all

comment:

- 18a. Huáng - sè de tǔ-dì dǎfèn zuì héshì
yellow - color relative soil manure most suitable
clause
marker
"The yellow soil (topic), manure is most suitable."
- b. Nèi - zuo fángzi xìngkuì qú - nián mèi xià xuě

that - classifier house fortunate last - year not down snow
 "That house (topic), fortunately it didn't snow last year."

- c. Dòngwu wǒ zǔzhāng bǎo - shǒu zhèngcè
 animal I advocate conservation policy
 "Animals (topic), I advocate a conservation policy."

In all three sentences of 18, it is very possible that the whole rest of the sentence is brand-new and no element is the particular focus of the speaker's attention or at least has not been mentioned before this point (it is impossible to know for sure, of course, without context). Each of these examples is striking, however, by the way the syntactic topic is the Representor of the relevant schema or scene and is used to evoke the entire schema or scene. In spite of the existence of sentences like those in 18, nevertheless sentences like those in 13 and 15 show that in topic-prominent languages the syntactic topic is not the only element in the sentence which can have topic properties.

2.3 Syntactic Reflexes of Topics

In previous sections we have seen a little of the nature of topics in language. It now remains for us to see if topics have any regular connection with any syntactic structures or elements. This question can be asked on a language-specific level and on a universal level. In discussions of both questions, the syntactic characteristics which have come up most frequently in connection with topics have been subjecthood and initial position in the sentence[15].

As alluded to in the Introduction to this chapter, because

prototypes are claimed to have psychological reality, there is a problem with claiming that there may be universal syntactic prototypes for syntactic constructions (cf. Dahlstrom 1984). It is not a problem language- internally to postulate psychological reality for a certain syntactic construction, since one can make the psychological reality contingent on knowledge of the language. And the requirement of psychological reality is no problem universally as far as discourse notions like "topic" are concerned, if one assumes that the human race is more or less homogeneous as regards its psychological make-up and needs. However, even a universal prototype for "topic" becomes problematical as soon as one adds to the prototype syntactic notions like sentence-initial position or subjecthood. When one adds syntactic facts to the prototype, then one must deal with the question "For whom is this a prototype?" because syntactic facts vary so drastically from language to language.

Compare, for example, the situations in English and Chinese. It may be argued that topics are prototypically sentence-initial for Chinese speakers. Certainly syntactic topics are sentence-initial in Chinese and other topic-prominent languages (cf. 11, 13, and 16 above; and Li and Thompson 1976:465). However, in spite of the existence of sentences like 12d in (spoken) English, no one would wish to claim that topics are treated syntactically the same in English and Chinese. For one thing, the sentence-initial (syntactic) topics are functionally discourse topics in Chinese, whereas when we speak of sentence-initial topics in English we are generally speaking of sentence topics -- though it is interesting that temporal clauses containing discourse topics, as

in 16 (page 53), tend to come in initial position, before the main-clause subject. In spite of the fact that topics are treated so differently in Chinese and in English, can Chinese speakers and English speakers be considered to have the same syntactic prototype for topics?

It is difficult to conceive of a universal syntactic prototype, then, because syntax is too language-specific. There are, as far as I know, no syntactic facts, such as "(sentence) topics are always sentence-initial," which are universal. All typological studies are concerned with trends and implicational universals rather than absolute universals. The need for a particular construction in a particular language is usually very much dependent on what G. Lakoff has called (personal communication) the "ecology" of the language, that is, the structure of the language as a whole. And the particular form and function of a construction in a particular language is constrained by the rest of the ecology of the language. It is well-known that for every language, many constructions do not have equivalents in every other language, and some constructions -- particularly minor ones -- may not have equivalents in any other language. And relations between syntactic and semantic categories are never exactly the same across languages.

Thus, for example, any correspondence between the syntactic category subject, the semantic category agent and the discourse category topic, in part depends on the "ecological niche" of the syntactic subject in the language, that is, the place that the syntactic subject takes up in the ecology, or structure of the language. An obvious

factor in the place of the syntactic subject in the ecology of a particular language is the presence or absence of syntactic topics in the language. This syntactic topic might then take over some of the topic function that a syntactic subject might have in another language -- though we have already seen that syntactic topics in Chinese often correspond to discourse topics, expressed in subordinate clauses or phrases in English. Nevertheless, sometimes a Chinese syntactic topic corresponds to a sentence topic in English, as in (most likely) 15 (page 53), repeated here:

15. Nèike shù yèzi dà.
 that tree leaves big
 "That tree (topic), the leaves are big."

Such a sentence in Chinese could be translated into English (depending on context) as 19,

19. That tree has big leaves.

where the sentence topic would probably be considered to be that tree. So a syntactic topic will take over some of the functions a subject has in a language without syntactic topics. Conversely, a language without a syntactic topic will obviously have to find some other means of coding a pragmatic topic than via the syntactic topic. In English, at least, the syntactic subject is frequently, but not always, called upon for this function (see also Firbas 1966, Bates and MacWhinney 1982:204, Van Valin and Foley 1980).

Another factor which influences the ecological niche of the subject in a language is the freedom of word order. For example, it is

much easier (that is, less marked) to prepose any element in a Dutch sentence than it is in English, and this is especially true of demonstratives, particularly one-word demonstratives but also phrases containing a demonstrative. (Dutch has the strategy of stranding prepositions in order to detach a demonstrative from its phrase and put it by itself at the front of the sentence.) As a result, subjects are not as often in initial position in Dutch as they are in English (and as the finite verb comes second in main clauses, if the subject is not first it comes no earlier than third). This obviously means that the correlation among subject, initial position and pragmatic topic must be different in Dutch and English. It seems that in Dutch, an initial element is much more commonly used to overtly link a sentence with the previous one than it is in English, and in spoken Dutch it is common to eliminate such an initial element entirely. This initial element is commonly the sentence topic. In some informal research that I have done on edited transcripts of spoken Dutch[16], I discovered that initial position was taken up by a non-subject 35% of the time, and that this was very frequently a single-syllable demonstrative with its antecedent either the whole previous sentence or an element in the previous sentence. In the following example[17], only two (20a,e) have an initial subject. Two (20b,h) have an understood demonstrative in first position: dan 'then' in 20b, and in 20h daar 'that,' lit. 'there' (object of the preposition bij). (If one were to ask a native speaker the "citation form" of these sentences, these two demonstratives would show up. Native speakers are quite consistent in this.) In two sentences the initial position is filled by an overt demonstrative: daar

'that,' lit. 'there' (object of the preposition voor) in 20f and dat 'that' (direct object) in 20g. In 20g,h, in addition, Dutch uses a demonstrative where English would not. (The two sentences not mentioned so far, 20c, a question, and 20d, a sentence fragment, are irrelevant to our purposes.) In the following, prt stands for 'modal particle':

- 20a. We hebben wel gehad dat ik geen schoenen had.
 We have prt had that I no shoes had
 'It has happened that I didn't have any shoes.'
- b. Kwamen ze hier aan de deur.
 came they here at the door
 '(Then) people would come to our door.'
- c. Is dat iets voor jou?
 Is that something for you
 '(Saying,) is this (maybe) something for you?'
- d. Spulletjes van overleden mensen.
 things of deceased people
 'Stuff (left by) people that died.'
- e. Ik zeg: geef maar op.
 I say give prt up
 '(So) I (would) say, go ahead and give (those to me).'
- f. Daar weet ik wel een gaatje voor.
 there know I prt a hole for
 'I can find a place for that.'
- g. Dat trok ik dan zelf aan.
 that put I then self on
 'Then I would put it on myself.'
- h. Waren soms leuke jassen of mantelpakjes bij
 were sometimes attractive coats or suits with
 van bejaarde mensen.
 of elderly people
 'Sometimes there would be attractive coats or suits that
 (used to) belong to elderly people (included) in (the
 bunch).'

From this fragment it is clear that initial position carries the function of pragmatic (sentence) topic much more than the subject does

in Dutch, or than the subject does in English: in four of the six relevant sentences above, the first position is taken up by a non-subject overt or understood demonstrative, and only in the other two cases is the subject, a "focus of interest" in these cases, in the first position. Comparing the Dutch with the English free translations, it is clear, first, that Dutch and English have different strategies for dealing with nonprototypical cases. In 20b, for example, where there is no true sentence topic, English uses an indefinite people as a type of placeholder for subject position (see also Section 5.5 below), whereas Dutch uses a type of "innocuous topic" dan 'then' (that is, an element that no hearer will erroneously take as the topic and that thus can safely take up topic position -- see the discussion on "innocuous subject" in English, Sections 5.5 and 5.6) as a placeholder for initial position. Second, the element that gets tracked by sentence-topic strategies places the emphasis on a different subset of the properties of topic in Dutch than in English. In English, the focus of interest seems to be tracked (in 20e,f,g) whereas in Dutch in two of the same sentences the focus of attention is tracked. At the same time, the type of semantic relation that can be held by the subject to the verb is much more restricted in Dutch than in English (cf. Bates and MacWhinney 1982:203; cf. also Rohdenburg 1974 for similar observations about German). It seems to be much more restricted in active Dutch sentences than in active English sentences to the primary in the case frame of a given verb. If it allows an agent, then, the subject has to be the agent[18]. So the relation between subject and agent is much stronger in Dutch than it is in English, while the relation between subject and

topic is much weaker -- though in the prototypical case in Dutch, as in English, the agent is the topic and a single entity has all three attributes, subject, topic and initial position. Can we say then that speakers of English and Dutch have the same syntactic prototype for pragmatic topic, but that their sentences deviate in different ways from that prototype? And if English and Dutch deal in different ways with deviations, can the prototype still be the same, especially with regard to the question of which characteristics are central and which peripheral?

Further, there are problems with the claim that the universal topic prototype clusters with the formal properties of initial position and subjecthood in the face of such languages as Malagasy, where the unmarked position for the subject is final position in the sentence (Keenan 1976a), or Ojibwa, where new information consistently precedes old information (Tomlin and Rhodes 1979). In each case, researchers claim that though occurring sentence-finally, these subjects do have topic properties as well.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the connection of subjects, initial position, agents and sentence topics is remarkably consistent across languages, even if not universal (see also note 3). As concerns the relation between topic and initial position, we have seen that not only topic-prominent languages like Chinese, Japanese and Korean, but also Dutch, which is considered a subject-prominent language, exploit this possibility: Prague School linguists have based their whole theory of communicative dynamism on this exploitation of initial position by

the topic function. As concerns the relation between (sentence) topic and subject, many people have noted the remarkably consistent relation between the two (cf. e.g. Keenan 1976b and all of Li 1976, and Bates and MacWhinney 1982). Similarly, people have noted a relation between subjects and agents, which cluster naturally with (basic-level) topics, as for example in Dutch, while we have seen in Section 3 that there is a natural correlation between agents and topics. These correlations are too frequent to be coincidental. If the topic prototype does not contain mention of syntactic characteristics like subjecthood or initial position, then these correlations are not accounted for.

Too frequently to attribute to chance, therefore, it is possible to correlate initial position and subjecthood with topics on a language-by-language basis. But other factors, such as conventionalization of structures and conflicting and nonprototypical demands on a linguistic interchange[19], make the correlation between subjects, topics and agents less direct, even in languages like English for which such a prototypical correlation can fairly easily be argued. Problematic languages for the claim that topics are prototypically in initial position are verb-first languages (assuming that active zones of topics are prototypically entities of the type referred to by nouns) and Malagasy and Ojibwa, where subjects do have topic properties but typically occur sentence-finally. Classes of problematic languages for the claim that topics are prototypically subjects are topic-prominent languages and ergative languages (cf. Dixon 1979 and Keenan 1976b:321). I have shown in Section 3 that even in Chinese, Japanese and Korean, languages with a syntactic topic, subjects tend to be more topical than

other elements in the sentence besides the syntactic topic.

It is logically possible but practically inconceivable that speakers of one language (a verb-initial one) would consistently have verbs as their sentence topics and speakers of another language would consistently have nouns; or that speakers of one language (an ergative one) would consistently choose patients as the active zone of their topics and speakers of another language would consistently choose agents. The problematic languages should be studied again, now that there is more clarity on the nature of topics. Sentences in these languages should be studied in context, taking account of the progress of both discourse and sentence topics. It may very well be that precisely these problematic languages will advance our understanding of the nature of topics and their progress in discourse the most.

For now, I propose that the question whether there are syntactic reflexes in the universal prototype for topics be answered with a cautious "yes." In spite of counterexamples like Malagasy and Ojibwa, it seems, after all, that cross-linguistically the most natural case is to first express (the Representor of) what one is talking about and then to say something about it; and it seems the most natural case to have the topic, which is the link between what came before and the current sentence, also physically come between what came before and the new information that is linked to it. And, given the correlation between agents and subjects, and the natural correlation between agents and topics, it would seem also to be the most natural case for a sentence topic to be a subject.

NOTES

- 1 An earlier and shorter version of this chapter was presented at the tenth annual meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society in February 1984, and published as Van Oosten 1984.
- 2 The Prague School linguists (Mathesius 1939, Daneš 1974, Firbas 1974) define theme basically as "what the sentence is about." Reinhart (1982) has attempted to give this very intuitive notion a more precise definition. Bates and MacWhinney (1982:199ff.) talk of topic as having a single function (aboutness) with multiple motives (given, speaker's point of view, salient). The term "starting point" has been used to mean something similar to aboutness (Mathesius 1939, cf. Daneš 1974; MacWhinney 1977), although for MacWhinney "starting point" has more of the attributes that I associate with the prototypical topic than aboutness alone. Charlotte Linde (1979:345ff.) relates "focus of attention" to topichood. Chafe (1974) has discussed the relation between consciousness and the given-new distinction. Mathesius (1939, cf. Daneš 1974:106) equated old information with aboutness. (Mention of the different types of given and new information discussed by Ellen Prince (1981) is appropriate here also.) Zubin (1979) has discussed the relation between topic and speaker's "focus of interest," applying his claims to German but intending the system to apply to speakers of any language. He distinguishes between "focus of interest" and "focus of attention." MacWhinney (1977) uses the term "speaker's perspective," by which he means the element speakers and hearers identify with, and from which they construct the sentence as part of the meaning of "starting point." Kuno (1975, 1976) has a very similar definition for what he calls "empathy," and relates it to topichood, subjecthood and something very similar to Zubin's "focus of interest." This discussion of the literature is not, of course, exhaustive, but is offered only by way of example.
- 3 Ochs Keenan and Schieffelin (1976) and Van Dijk (1977) discuss the relation between discourse topics and sentence topics, and Schank (1977) speaks of global and local topics. Reinhart (1982) also speaks of discourse and sentence topics, but only discusses the latter; and her definition of "discourse topic" is not quite the same as the others', as far as I can tell. Bates and MacWhinney (1982:201) speak of topics as being layered, but their concept is not the same as the one proposed here. Essentially, they are speaking of the succession of basic-level topics in a discourse, several of which can but do not have to occur in the same sentence.
- 4 By "sentence topic" I do not mean necessarily a syntactic category or even a grammaticized concept, although in some languages a sentence

topic may be one or the other. Thus in Japanese and Chinese there is a syntactic category "topic" (though it may be referring to a discourse topic rather than being a sentence topic in some cases; see below, Section 2.2) and in the Slavic languages the concept of sentence topic is grammaticized to occur at the beginning of the sentence (see the work of Prague School linguists, for example Firbas 1964; Sgall, Hajičová and Benešová 1973).

5 See Fillmore (1975, 1976, 1977), Lakoff (1977, 1982), Coleman and Kay (1981), Sweetser (1983). I choose the term "cognitive schema" out of a set of terms designating much the same or related things. Fillmore (1976:23) talks about "cognitive and interactional 'frames' in terms of which the language-user interprets his environment," and mentions the terms "schema" and "scenario" as more or less equivalent. In Fillmore (1975, 1977) the term "scene" is used for much the same thing. Lakoff (1982) speaks of "idealized cognitive models" in much the same way. Coleman and Kay (1981) and Sweetser (1983) use the term "cognitive schema." I shall use the term "(cognitive) schema" to mean the standard, hypothetical knowledge structures human beings use to interpret their environment; I shall use the term "(actualized) scene" to designate an event or occurrence, whether in the speaker's present or in memory, which is interpreted by the speaker via a related schema; and I shall restrict the term "frame" to mean, as in Fillmore (1975), "any system of linguistic choices ... that can get associated with [cognitive schemata]," and particularly "case frame" to mean the semantic relations of the arguments associated with a verb.

6 This is what makes, for example, the Mad Hatter's tea party in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland understandable, and unexpected discrepancies between the schema and the story make it funny.

7 Some of these discourse topics have constraints on their becoming overt for politeness reasons. However, enjoying oneself can become overt when one guest says to another guest,

(i) This is no fun! Let's go home.

or when a guest says to the host, upon parting,

(ii) Thank you for the lovely time.

8 Schank 1977:426 speaks of generalizations as "supertopics" and of evaluations as one type of "metatopic." He also points out that it is not always appropriate to allude directly to these levels in conversation.

9 I am grateful to George Lakoff for this interpretation of the notion "subordinate topic."

10 The notion of "Representor" is similar but not identical to Langacker's (1984) notion of "active zones." I understand Langacker to mean by the term "active zone" something like the point in an entity or a scene where the activity which is the speaker's concern is

localized. Langacker gives the example in (i):

- (i) Susan has a cigarette in her mouth.

The active zone of Susan is her mouth, and the active zone of the cigarette is one end of it. In Langacker's examples, what is mentioned is usually larger than an active zone and has an active zone as part of it. So for example, what is mentioned in the subject of (i) is Susan, while the mention of the active zone is relegated to a prepositional phrase at the end of the sentence (and, in the least marked form of the sentence, after the point of clause stress, which is, in the unmarked case, on cigarette). The active zone of the cigarette is not even mentioned in the sentence. Representors, on the other hand, are usually smaller than the entity they represent. Up to now we have only talked about Representors which refer to a participant in a schema or scene and are used to represent the schema or scene in the sentence. Clearly these Representors are smaller than the entity they are representing, since they are a proper subset of it.

In the prototypical case, the active zone of a discourse topic and its Representor in a sentence are identical. In other words, speakers tend to use the locus of activity in the schema or scene to represent the whole scene. I would point out, in addition, that Langacker requires my notion of "Representor" in order for his notion of "active zone" to work. In his example (i) above, note that our understanding of what the active zones of the participants Susan and cigarette are, depends on our knowledge of the cigarette-smoking schema. But what brings this schema to mind is the mention of participants in a scene which is an instantiation of this schema, namely the cigarette and Susan's mouth: together, these are the active zone of the scene. In order to know that the active zones of Susan and the cigarette are, respectively, her mouth and the cigarette's end, therefore, we have to know of what instantiated schema Susan and the cigarette are the active zone.

- 11 The situation is a little more complicated. The proposition "everybody bugs everybody else" is itself not an evaluation but it implies an evaluation. We will ignore this complication here, as tangential to the topic at hand.
- 12 Bates and MacWhinney 1982:199 give aboutness as the single function of topics, motivated by multiple motives. Li and Thompson 1976:464 speak of topic being the "center of attention" as their "functional role." However, this seems to be less of a function for topics than aboutness. Fortunately, these two attributes seem to cluster together almost without exception.

We are depending on an intuitive notion of what it means for a statement to be "about" something. See Reinhart (1982) for one attempt at defining the notion within one formulation of the nature of memory.
- 13 Not much research has been done yet on basic-level objects in the sense required here, as far as I know, that is, basic-level objects or

participants in a scene or schema. This is unfortunate, because the notion is difficult to define. It does not seem to be identical to the notion of basic-level objects in the framework of categorization, though it bears many similarities. I hope, however, that the notion of "basic-level" object and the notion of "basic-level" participant in a scene or schema are intuitively clear to my readers, since basic-level topics are essentially basic-level objects or participants which are being used as topics (see on this, again, Zubin 1979:475).

- 14 I thank Gary Holland for discussing the germ of this idea with me while I was still skeptical.

- 15 For example, Halliday (1967:212) says that the theme, "what is being talked about," is the element that comes first in the sentence. MacWhinney (1977:152) gives as one of the necessary conditions for "starting point" that it be the first element in the sentence. Topics and subjects have been related since the beginning. Paul (1889:112ff.) gave the term "psychological subject" to what we might equate with topic, though he was careful to say psychological and syntactic subjects were not the same. Kuno (1976:432) posited a relation between subject and speaker's empathy when he said that "it is easiest for the speaker to empathize with the referent of the subject." Bates and MacWhinney (1982:204) propose that topic and agent vie for control of the category subject in what Li and Thompson (1976:460) have called subject-prominent languages, which includes English, and topic-prominent languages, such as Lisu. In subject-prominent languages, according to Bates and MacWhinney, agent is more likely to become the subject, and in topic-prominent languages, the topic is more likely to become the subject. Keenan (1976b:318) gives as one of the characteristics of "basic subjects" that they are normally the topic of their sentence. Chafe (1976:43) says about subjects: "So far as I can see at present, the best way to characterize the subject function is not very different from the ancient statement that the subject is what we are talking about" -- the central characteristic of topics, in my framework. Again, I do not claim completeness for this overview of the literature.

- 16 From De Kam and Nypels 1980:167-180. I have reason to suspect that the transcripts are very heavily edited. Nevertheless, the style comes across as much more conversational than normal written style, and it is a safe bet that it contains many conversational characteristics not usually found in written Dutch. For example, initial demonstrative elements in sentences are frequently understood rather than overt, something which happens in spoken but not in written Dutch. Of the 455 sentences in the fragment, 426 had an element in first position (before the finite verb). Of those 426, 278 (65%) were subjects. I expect that in English the percentage would be higher. Many of the subjects, of course, are also used as a link with the previous sentence and some non-subjects in first position are there for reasons other than to link the sentence up with the previous sentence.

- 17 From De Kam and Nypels 1980:124.

- 18 There are exceptions to this. For example, Dutch does allow patient-subject-like sentences like (i),

- (i) Deze schoenen lopen lekker.
 these shoes walk comfortably
 "These a comfortable shoes to walk in."

though most frequently the subject in this case is het 'it' or equivalent demonstratives:

- (ii) Hij nam haar hand en trok haar van het plankier tussen
 de strandstoelen.
 "He took her hand and pulled her off the boardwalk and
 among the beach chairs."

Het liep wel moeilijker
 it walked prt difficult-comparative
 "It was a little harder to walk (there)"

maar hij vreesde een spoedige achtervolging en hier
 waren ze tenminste aan het gezicht onttrokken.
 "but he feared they would soon be followed and here, at
 least, they were hidden from view." (Heeresma 1972:45)

- (iii) Als u eens ... van onder het bed vandaan kwam, dan
 konden wij de conversatie op een wat gelijk niveau
 voortzetten.
 "If you could come out from under the bed, we could
 continue the conversation on a more equal level."

Dit praat wat vermoeiend.
 this talks somewhat tiring
 "It's somewhat tiring to talk this way." (Baantjer
 1978:73)

This phenomenon is much less widespread than in English, however, and in general, the semantic relation between subject and verb is much less susceptible to variation in active Dutch sentences than it is in active English sentences.

- 19 See Bates and MacWhinney 1982:190ff., where they discuss the fact that the language channel has limitations while the set of meanings a speaker might wish to convey is infinite, and that there may be various solutions to the competition brought about by this; and the fact that conventionalization of learned behaviors is useful in social situations but may also bring about disequilibrium in the language system, as well as vestigial solutions.

Chapter 3

Nonprototypical Sentence Topics

Sentence topics can be nonprototypical in two ways. In the first place, a single entity in a sentence can clearly be the most topical element in the sentence, but its referent does not contain all the characteristics of a prototypical topic that have been discussed in Section 2.2. For example, we saw there that in adult speech the referent of the sentence topic frequently is not present and visible to the speaker and hearer: either it is abstract, or, more likely, it is concrete but simply not present. The second way in which a sentence topic can be nonprototypical is when it has to share topic properties with another entity in the sentence. Every language contains constructions which can be used when not all the characteristics of a prototypical topic are met in a single entity in the sentence. English has such devices as extraposition, it-cleft and WH-cleft, topicalization, left-dislocation, existential there, and passive. In Chapter 5 we will look in great detail at the functions of passive. In this section, we will look more cursorily at three special constructions: some types of existential there sentences in Section 3.1, it-cleft constructions in Section 3.2, and one type of property-factoring in Section 3.3, the type exemplified in 1b as compared with 1a:

1a

- 1a. The price of rice has gone up.
- b. Rice has gone up in price.

3.1 Existential Sentences

A speaker chooses to use an existential-there construction in order to be able to mention an entity which the speaker assumes is not in the hearer's consciousness prior to the utterance, nor even in the hearer's current knowledge structure[1]. The existential sentences I will be considering here are all examples of the "Central Existential" in Lakoff's (1984) terms. Their general form is:

2. There (unaccented) - BE - NP (indefinite) - (modifier of NP)

Under "BE" I include such verbs of existence as exist, ensue, arise, etc. The optional modifier I will call the codicil, following Milsark's (1974:8) felicitous term 'coda' for the NP plus the modifier. (See Van Oosten 1978a for a more complete discussion of the possible types of codicils.) In this section I will henceforth refer to the NP after BE, without its modifier, simply as "the NP."

Jespersen (1924:154) suggests that English has a "disinclination to take as subject a word with the indefinite article":

Instead of beginning a story in this way: "A tailor was once living in a small house," etc., it is more natural to begin: "Once upon a time there was a tailor," etc. By putting the weak there in the place usually occupied by the subject we as it were hide away the subject and reduce it to an inferior position, because it is indefinite.

It is not the case, however, that it is totally impossible to have an indefinite NP in subject position in English. Sentences like the following are perfectly all right:

- 3 A What happened to the rabbit?
B Somebody left the gate open and he ran away.
- 4 A What happened to the rabbit?
B A dog tried to attack him and he died of fright.
5. Did you see that? A man just ran across the road right in front of the parade.

In fact, in the above sentences it would be less felicitous to use an existential construction:

- 6 A What happened to the rabbit?
Ba ??There was somebody who left the gate open and he ran away.
b *There was somebody leaving the gate open and he ran away.
- 7 A What happened to the rabbit?
Ba ??There was a dog who tried to attack him and he died of fright.
b ??There was a dog trying to attack him and he died of fright.
- 8a. ??Did you see that? There was a man who just ran across the road right in front of the parade.
b. Did you see that? There was a man (*just) running across the road right in front of the parade.

On the other hand, sometimes it seems impossible not to use an existential construction when a subject is indefinite:

- 9a. ?*A book is on the table.
b. There is a book on the table.

What is the difference? It is not just the case that the speaker is assuming that the subject is not in the addressee's consciousness or

knowledge structure and that it has to be raised to there. (Being in a person's consciousness entails, of course, being in a person's knowledge structure.) Presumably the man of 63 was also not in the addressee's consciousness or knowledge structure before the utterance of the sentence and yet not using an existential construction is more felicitous than using one. In fact, it is often the case that definite NPs are used as subject which can also be assumed not to have been in the addressee's consciousness prior to the utterance event, but by the use of the definite article it is made clear that the speaker assumed it to be in the hearer's knowledge structure, at least potentially. A case in point is the following dialogue (from Chafe 1976:48):

- 10 A: What happened to the lamp?
B: The dog knocked it over.

Even if the dog had been the farthest thing from A's mind, and even if A did not know that B had a dog, the use of the dog in subject position is appropriate if there is an unambiguous referent for it (and if the speakers' home-life schema includes a pet dog as a possible participant). Of course, an existential is not even marginally possible here, whereas it is marginally possible in 64-66. The requirement that the NP not be in the hearer's current knowledge structure (according to the speaker) thus seems to be a necessary condition for all existentials -- though not a sufficient condition, as we saw in 3-5: the condition held true there too but an existential was not as appropriate as a sentence with indefinite-NP subject.

In this section I will consider differences in use between an

existential sentence and one which contains the same major verb and where the displaced subject is a normal subject of the major verb, as for example the sentences in 6-8 and their non-existential counterparts in 3-5, and 11b,c as opposed to 11a:

- 11a. A Freemason in full regalia was running down the street.
- b. There was a Freemason in full regalia who was running down the street.
- c. There was a Freemason in full regalia running down the street.

I will also consider sentences like those in 12-14, which do not have a non-existential counterpart.

- 12. There is even a garden.
- 13. There's plenty of time.
- 14. There was such a glorious sunset.

In order to delineate the uses of existential sentences, it is necessary to distinguish them according to codicils, since existentials with different codicils have different criteria of use. We must distinguish at least between existential sentences with codicils as follows:

- nothing or a locative adverbial phrase
- a (present) participial phrase, or
- a relative clause

Examples of these three types are found in 15, 16 and 17, respectively:

- 15a. There is even a garden.
- b. There were fresh flowers in a silver bowl on the chest of drawers.
- 16. There were boys playing in the water.
- 17. There is a man at Harvard who thinks the same way.

There are central existentials with other types of codicils as well, such as an infinitive phrase as in 18a or a non-locative adverbial phrase as in 18b,

- 18a. There had been no opportunity or strength to wash.
- b. There was a massive dignity about the man.

but I am not prepared to say anything about their function at this time. In addition, positive existentials sometimes behave differently from negative existentials, and I do not extend my analysis to negative existentials here, though I think that frequently those differences can be explained on independent grounds, based on the different uses negative sentences have in discourse in general compared to positive sentences.

In what follows I will look first at existentials with a locative adverbial codicil or no codicil, then at existentials with a relative-clause codicil, and lastly at existentials with a (present) participial-phrase codicil.

3.1.1 Existential With No or Locative Adverbial Codicil

In 19 and 20 are existentials with no codicil:

- 19. "Of course it's big, man, it's America! It's so big we aren't quite sure where it ends! Think of it -- Virginia has no western boundary line!"
"But -- surely there are maps," Julian began. "I saw several maps in London--" (Thane 1943:3)
- 20. Julian descended from the coach and looked about him with approval.
 - a. "Why, this is charming," he said. "There is even a garden."

- "What did you expect, man, a circle of huts inside a stockade?"
- b. "But there was a stockade," said Julian, as though glancing about for it. (Thane 1943:7)

In each case the speaker wants only to assert the existence of the NP. It is not necessary that the speaker thinks that the referent of the NP is not in the hearer's knowledge structure, as any of the three examples in 19 and 20 will attest, or that it is not in the hearer's consciousness, as the garden example in 20a shows.

The same thing is true for existentials with a locative adverbial codicil, as in 21 and 22:

21. "Please, sir [...] There is a notice on the door of the dominie's school. We saw it when we came by. Are you the Mr. Julian Day it says is going to teach the school now?" (Thane 1943:51)
22. "What was your mother like, sir?" Tibby inquired sociably over the bread and cheese.
"I never saw her. She was only seventeen when I was born, and she died. She was small, my father said, and had red hair."
"There is red in your hair too when the sun shines on it," Tibby informed him. "Round your ears, where it waves a bit." (Thane 1943:87)

In each case it does not make much difference whether the hearer knows or is conscious of the information imparted in the existential sentence. Insofar as utterances are meant to inform, it is a requirement of all utterances that they impart information which is not already in the hearer's consciousness, and so it is not surprising that existentials, which only assert the existence of the NP referent (and with the adverbial, assert it in a certain location), should be considered to be appropriate only when the existence of the entity is

not already in the hearer's knowledge structure or at least not in the hearer's consciousness. But in fact utterances are used for a lot more things than just to inform, and one of the major other purposes is to let the hearer know that the speaker knows the information contained in the utterance.

3.1.2 Existentials with Relative-Clause Codicils

In order for an existential with relative-clause codicil to be appropriate, however, more conditions must be met. They are:

- the referent of the NP is assumed by the speaker not to be in the hearer's knowledge structure
- the referent of the NP is assumed by the speaker not to be in the hearer's consciousness
- the referent of the NP is the speaker's focus of attention.
- the referent of the NP is the Representor of the scene evoked or presupposed by the sentence.

These criteria are meant only for those existentials with relative-clause codicil where the relative clause is necessary to help identify the entity whose existence and relevance are being established.

Sometimes a relative clause in this position is used only to add further information, as in the following:

23. The houses are built for the heat, with a garden door set opposite the front door [...] There is a contrivance called the shoo-fly which works with a treadle and has a hanging fringe which keeps the air in motion [...] (Thane 1943:54)
24. Cherry-colored damask hangings framed all the windows from ceiling to floor. There was a handsome wainscoting which came halfway up the whitewashed walls. (Thane 1943:97)

These relative clauses are equivalent to nonrestrictive relative clauses, and, as a general rule, if the relative clause can be preceded by a comma, then the relative clause is not necessary for the establishment of the existence of the referent of the NP and it is not of the type of codicil we are dealing with here. For example, the relative clauses in the existential sentences in 23 and 24 may be preceded by a comma:

- 25a. There is a contrivance called the shoo-fly, which works with a treadle and has a hanging fringe which keeps the air in motion.
- b. There was a handsome wainscoting, which came halfway up the whitewashed walls.

Compare the following, where a comma is not possible (the contexts are given in 27 and 31 below):

- 72a.??There is a dog, who is going to drown if Lassie doesn't rescue her, and her master will be heartbroken.
- b.??There is a man at Harvard, who thinks the same way.

An example of an existential with relative-clause codicil in context is given in 27:

- 27. Why are you crying over that silly Lassie episode?
 - a. There's a dog that's going to drown if Lassie doesn't rescue her, and her master will be heartbroken.
 - b.?*A dog is going to drown if Lassie doesn't rescue her, and her master will be heartbroken.

The speaker of 27a assumes that the hearer is not attending to the story in the Lassie episode and neither the dog nor the whole scene is in the hearer's consciousness or even in the hearer's knowledge structure. The dog is the Representor of the scene and the speaker's focus of

attention.

Another example, this one from a written text:

28. "Did you see Dr. Franklin often?" inquired Sprague after a moment.
 B: "Fairly often. There is a sort of club that meets every other Thursday at the coffee house in Ludgate Hill. I hadn't really any right to be there, of course, but my father always took me, and nobody objected, so I-- sat and listened."
 (Thane 1943:8)

In the existential with relative clause codicil, in boldface above, the "sort of club" is both the focus of attention and the Representor of the scene that speaker B is laying out for Sprague, for whom it is not in his knowledge structure. Note that if B were to have said 29,

29. "Fairly often. A sort of club meets every other Thursday at the coffee house in Ludgate Hill. I hadn't really any right to be there, of course, but my father always took me, and nobody objected, so I-- sat and listened."

it would be unclear why the "sort of club" was being mentioned, since it was neither Representor nor focus of attention. On the other hand, B could have said 30,

30. "Fairly often. A sort of club meets every other Thursday at the coffee house in Ludgate Hill, and he used to come there frequently. I hadn't really any right to be there, of course, but my father always took me, and nobody objected, so I-- sat and listened."

because then the "sort of club" would indeed not be the speaker's focus of attention; rather, he -- Dr. Franklin -- would be.

Another example (cf. 17 above):

31. It was Dr. Franklin who was really responsible for our coming to Virginia. He got my father the post at the College here. He says there should be no politics and no national frontiers in learning. There is a man at Harvard who thinks the same way. My father wanted to make of himself a sort of link between the College of William and Mary and the universities at home, in the hope of a better understanding [...] (Thane 1943:8)

The sentence containing the existential with relative-clause codicil is a one-sentence tangent to generalize the idea expressed in the previous sentence. In the existential in question, the man at Harvard is both the speaker's focus of attention and the Representor of the tangent. The focus of attention has to be established or the sense of the tangent will be lost. Compare 31 with 32:

32. It was Dr. Franklin who was really responsible for our coming to Virginia. He got my father the post at the College here. He says there should be no politics and no national frontiers in learning. A man at Harvard thinks the same way. My father wanted to make of himself a sort of link between the College of William and Mary and the universities at home, in the hope of a better understanding [...]

When the sentence in question is not in the existential form with relative-clause codicil, the sentence seems out of place and irrelevant.

In 3-5, repeated here, are examples where an existential with relative-clause codicil is inappropriate, as shown in the (a) parts of 6-8, also repeated here:

- 3 A: What happened to the rabbit?
B: Somebody left the gate open and he ran away.
- 4 A: What happened to the rabbit?
B: A dog tried to attack him and he died of fright.

5. Did you see that? A man just ran across the road right in front of the parade.

6 A: What happened to the rabbit?

Ba: ??There was somebody who left the gate open and he ran away.

7 A: What happened to the rabbit?

Ba: ??There was a dog who tried to attack him and he died of fright.

8a. ??Did you see that? There was a man who just ran across the road right in front of the parade.

In B's response in 61, the "somebody" who left the gate open is very likely not expected by B to be in A's knowledge structure or in A's consciousness, and is the Representor of the event related in the sentence, but definitely the "somebody" is not B's focus of attention. If s/he was B's focus of attention, then the he in the continuation of the sentence would refer to the referent of somebody and in fact the most likely referent of he is the rabbit. So, the use of an existential with relative-clause codicil, as in 6a, is inappropriate. Similarly, in 4 the dog is most likely not considered by B to be in A's knowledge structure or even consciousness, and he is the Representor of the event, but the rabbit is the focus of B's attention and not the dog, and so again the use of an existential with relative-clause codicil, as in 7a, is inappropriate. Example 5 is interesting: one would have thought that if anything were the Representor and the focus of attention in this case it would be the man who is the subject of 5, yet the existential with relative-clause codicil, as in 8a, is odd. In fact, however, although the man is likely the Representor of the event described in the sentence, he is not particularly important to the speaker; his identity, for example, is irrelevant. Also note the use of that in the previous

question: this demonstrative does not refer to the man, but to the whole scene; so the whole scene is the focus of the speaker's attention and not just the man. If the man were the focus of the speaker's attention, then the existential with relative-clause codicil would be appropriate, as in 33:

33 A: Did you see that man?

B: What man?

A: There was a man who just ran across the road right in front of the parade.

The reason why an existential with relative-clause codicil is marginally possible in 6a-8a is that it is possible to imagine a situation in which, for example, 6a and 7a are about the dog or the person who left the gate open, or 8a is about the man.

3.1.3 Existentials with Participial Codicil

In sentences of the form

34. There be NP present participle ...

the criterion does not hold that the NP must be the focus of attention of the scene which is the discourse topic. But the NP does have to be the Representor and considered to have not previously been in the addressee's knowledge structure. At the same time, the time of the assertion of existence and the time of the action in the participial phrase have to be the same. Criteria for the use of this type of existential are as follows:

- the referent of the NP is assumed by the speaker not to be in the hearer's knowledge structure
- the referent of the NP is assumed by the speaker not to be in the hearer's consciousness
- the referent of the NP is the Representor of the scene evoked or presupposed by the sentence.
- the time of the main clause and surrounding context is the same as the time of the action in the participial phrase

The best way to demonstrate what I mean by this last criterion is by way of a negative example: where an existential with participial codicil is not possible because the times of the assertion of existence and of the participial phrase do not match. This is in 8b above (page 39), repeated here:

8b. Did you see that? There was a man (*just) running across the road right in front of the parade.

We have seen that the man fulfills the other three requirements for this kind of existential: the speaker assumes that he is not in the hearer's consciousness or even in the hearer's knowledge structure; and he is likely the Representor of the event. But with just in the participial phrase, the time of the event of the participial phrase is not quite the same as the time of the assertion of the man's existence: without the just, the two times can be assumed to be identical and the existential is acceptable. Again, let us look at the versions of 6-7 with participial codicil:

6 A: What happened to the rabbit?

Bb: *There was somebody leaving the gate open and he ran away.

7 A: What happened to the rabbit?

Bb: ??There was a dog trying to attack him and he died of fright.

The relevant time in the main clause is the time at which something happened to the rabbit. In 6, what happened was that he ran away; in 7 he died of fright. I take it that the time of the BE in the first main clause refers to this time also. The time of the event in the participial phrase, under the most likely scenario, preceded those events if only by a little, and so a participial-phrase codicil is not appropriate. In the unlikely scenario where these two events coincide, the existential with participial-phrase codicil is appropriate.

The following is an example where this kind of existential is appropriate. Upon hearing a loud screeching and growling coming from the back yard, A may exclaim: "Is that the rabbit? What's wrong with him?" to which B may respond with either 35 or 36:

- 35. A dog is trying to attack him but it sounds like he's putting up a good fight.
- 36. There's a dog trying to attack him but it sounds like he's putting up a good fight.

Sentence 36 is, if anything, more appropriate; even though not a dog but the rabbit is the focus of attention of the discourse topic, the dog is the Representor. The time of the participial phrase is the same as the time that something is wrong with the rabbit, and so an existential with participial-phrase codicil is appropriate. The corresponding sentence with a relative-clause codicil is not acceptable in this context, because the dog is not the focus of attention:

- 37. There's a dog who is trying to attack him but it sounds like he's putting up a good fight.

Another example is found in 38, imitating a literary context:

38. What he saw sent a shock of fear through him.
- a. A rowboat with three people in it was floating down the river and coming dangerously close to the falls.
 - b. There was a rowboat with three people in it floating down the river and coming dangerously close to the falls.
 - c.??There was a rowboat with three people in it which was floating down the river and coming dangerously close to the falls.
 - d. There were three people who were in a rowboat floating down the river and coming dangerously close to the falls.

Sentence 38a is appropriate for someone taking the whole event as the focus of their attention. However, since the rowboat is considered not to have previously been in the addressee's knowledge structure and is the Representor, and since the times of the main event and of the participial phrase coincide, it can be used in an existential sentence with present-participial codicil, as 38b shows. But the rowboat is not the focus of the perceiver's attention: the people are. Therefore the existential form with relative-clause codicil is not acceptable, as in 38c; but when one changes the sentence around and makes three people the NP, an existential sentence with relative-clause codicil is acceptable since the three people are the focus of attention, not considered to have previously been in the addressees' knowledge structure, and the Representors.

3.1.4 The Relation of Form and Function

In this section we consider the reasons why these conditions on the occurrence of existentials should hold. First, why is it sometimes possible to have an indefinite in subject position and sometimes not?

Regular subjects, whether definite or indefinite, presuppose the existence of their referent (cf. Keenan 1974, 1976b). Even if the addressee did not previously know of the existence of the referent, it does not hamper the comprehension process if the addressee has to infer this existence from the use of the NP, if its referent is just one of the "minor characters" surrounding the actual focus of attention. But if the subject is the focus of attention, then its existence must be established first before anything is said about it. In fact, it is giving a minor character too much prominence to go out of one's way to assert its existence by couching it in existential form when not doing so would cause its existence to be presupposed in any case.

It seems that the existence of subjects in English has either to be presupposed or to be asserted. This is in keeping with Keenan's "Functional Principle" which states (1974:298):

- (i) The reference of the argument expression must be determinable independently of the meaning or reference of the function symbol;
- (ii) Functions which apply to the argument however may vary with the choice of argument (and so need not be independent of it).

Taking the "function" as being the predicate and the "argument" as being the subject, this means that "to evaluate the truth of a simple sentence we must mentally identify the referent of the subject and then determine whether the predicate holds of it or not" (ibid.:299). Paradoxically, it seems that the possibility of a presupposition of existence for the subject depends in part on the predicate: existence is more easily presupposed if the subject is depicted in the predicate as being more

active. If the subject is just depicted as having a location, this is not enough for its existence, if it is indefinite, to be presupposable. Thus the existence of a book in 9 (page 73) has to be asserted because it cannot be presupposed. Even if a dialogue like 39 is about the table, if a mess is to be made the subject its existence must be asserted. It is more likely, in fact, that the table would be made the subject as in 39c, but 39a is certainly possible:

39. What's wrong with the table?
a. There's a mess on it.
b. *A mess is on it.
c. It's a mess.

Sentence 39c is totally unacceptable because existence cannot be presupposed in contexts where the assertion of existence depends merely on a location. If there is no predicate at all, that is if nothing is said about the subject NP -- if there is no codicil -- then of course the addressee has no basis for assuming its existence and the speaker must assert it. That is the only reason for uttering a predicateless existential sentence.

The primary reason to use an existential sentence is thus simply to assert the existence of the referent of the NP. There are various reasons for doing this. The prototypical reason, perhaps, is to inform the hearer of the existence of the referent. Another frequently-occurring reason, however, is to let the hearer know that the speaker is aware of the existence of the referent. In my research this has been a common reason particularly with existentials with locative adverbial or no codicil. The existentials in 20b, 21 and 22 on pages 76 are of this

type; they are repeated here:

20. Julian descended from the coach and looked about him with approval.
 - a. "Why, this is charming," he said. "There is even a garden."
"What did you expect, man, a circle of huts inside a stockade?"
 - b. "But there was a stockade," said Julian, as though glancing about for it. (Thane 1943:7)
21. "Please, sir [...] There is a notice on the door of the dominie's school. We saw it when we came by. Are you the Mr. Julian Day it says is going to teach the school now?" (Thane 1943:51)
22. "What was your mother like, sir?" Tibby inquired sociably over the bread and cheese.
"I never saw her. She was only seventeen when I was born, and she died. She was small, my father said, and had red hair."
"There is red in your hair too when the sun shines on it," Tibby informed him. "Round your ears, where it waves a bit." (Thane 1943:87)

It does not come up so much with existentials with relative-clause or participial codicil, where the prototypical reason -- to inform the hearer -- is more prevalent, and which, therefore, are used almost exclusively when the speaker thinks the entity is not in the hearer's consciousness and indeed not in the hearer's knowledge structure.

A third reason to use an existential is to make a comment on the fact of the entity's existence. The existentials in 19 and 20a (page 76) are of this type. I repeat the relevant parts here as 40a and 6, respectively:

- 40a. But-- surely there are maps.
- b. There is even a garden.

In each case the existential is uttered only to hold the adverbial

comment, surely and even, respectively. The sentences are uttered neither to inform the hearer of the existence of the referent of the NP nor to inform the hearer that the speaker is aware of their existence[2].

When the referent of the NP is portrayed as performing some action, more reason is required to couch the utterance in existential form, since its existence can be presupposed from its participation in an event -- the more active, the better. A sentence like 41b is better in most contexts (for example, the context of an anxious crowd) than a sentence like 41a:

- 41a. A child felt sick.
- b. A child threw up.

More complex existentials combine characteristics of existentials in general with characteristics of their codicils. The use of a present participle, for example, requires that the time reference of the participial phrase is concurrent with the time reference of the main clause (that is, with the time referred to by the 'BE' of 2 (page 72)). The use of the existential with present participial codicil thus requires that the NP is not only considered by the speaker not to be in the hearer's consciousness or even in the hearer's knowledge structure, but also that the time reference of the participial phrase is concurrent with that of the main clause.

Similarly, the syntactic independence of the NP is mirrored by the pragmatic independence of its referent. A relative clause is syntactically more independent than a participial phrase, whereas an

adverbial phrase is syntactically the least independent of all: a relative clause has an independent verb with its own arguments, an independent subject and an independent tense; a participial phrase has an independent verb but no independent subject and a more dependent tense -- either referring to a point simultaneous with the time reference of the main verb in the case of present participles (the only type studied here), or referring to a point preceding the time reference of the main verb in the case of past participles, and the possibilities are restricted by the relation of the verb in the participial phrase to the head; and an adverbial phrase has no independent verb at all and therefore no independent time reference.

This scale mirrors the pragmatic independence of the NPs they modify in such constructions. When a referent is part of a scene or schema without much other importance, its syntactic independence is not very great either, and its existence can be presupposed if there is an action connected with it (see the examples in 3-5 on page 73 and the discussion on page 87. It is only when there is no action involved that an existential sentence should be used, as in the existentials in 19-22 and in 39 above (pages 76f. and 88). When the NP is the head of a relative clause, the NP must have independence to the point of being both the Representor and the focus of attention. Examples are discussed on pages 78-83 above. When the NP heads a participial phrase, the NP must have independence to the point of being the Representor, but need not be the focus of attention, as I discussed on pages 83-86. When there is no codicil, as in 19-22 and 39 above, the NP need not have any independence at all, except that its existence needs to be important

enough in the context to be remarked upon.

3.2 It-Cleft Sentences

It-cleft sentences are another way that unusual topics can be marked, particularly, but certainly not exclusively, in the written form of English. The characterization of "topic" used in this work facilitates the description of its function: it-clefts are used to place special emphasis on the focus of attention of a discourse topic. They differ from existentials, however, in the reason for this emphasis: rather than serving to bring th referent into the hearer's consciousness or knowledge structure, this special construction serves to identify the referent from among competing candidates. It is sometimes the case that the mention of the NP also serves to bring the entity referred to into the hearer's consciousness or knowledge structure, but this is not the primary purpose of it-clefts. In what follows I will base myself on the work of Prince (1978), Borkin (1984) and on some twenty examples of it-clefts from three issues of the Christian Science Monitor (March 22 and 30 and April 2, 1984) and the Daily Californian of April 4, 1984. I will thus be restricting myself to written uses of it-clefts.

It-clefts are of the form exemplified in 42:

42. It was those thieves that stole his stereo.

The constituent after it BE is called the focus by both Prince and Borkin, who base their terminology on that of previous work, and the

constituent after that they call the presupposition. I will use the same terms here, although this analysis has very little if anything to do with the analysis in Chomsky 1971 where those terms are introduced, and although the term "presupposition" is somewhat misleading since the information after that is frequently not presupposed, as both Prince and Borkin point out and as we will see below. The term focus is, however, uniquely suited to our analysis of it-clefts, since as I will argue below the focus of an it-cleft marks the focus of attention of the discourse topic that the it-cleft appeals to.

Note that the focus and the presupposition together make up a sentence which is truth-functionally equivalent to the it-clefted sentence. Thus 42 is truth-functionally equivalent to 43:

43. Those thieves stole his stereo.

Both Prince and Borkin note that it is frequently the subject that is made the focus in an it-cleft sentence, as in 42, but that this is not necessarily the case. When the subject is in focus position, however, the relative linear order of the constituents in the sentence does not change. It is thus unlikely that it-clefts are used, or are used primarily, to change the relative linear order of the elements in a sentence.

Prince distinguishes two types of it-clefts in particular: what she calls stressed-focus it-clefts and informative-presupposition it-clefts. One of Prince's examples of a stressed-focus it-cleft is given in 44 (Prince's 38a):

44. ...So I learned to sew books. They're really good books.
It's just the covers that are rotten. (Bookbinder in Terkel
1975:409)

In a stressed-focus it-cleft, the focus receives contrastive stress and the presupposition is uttered with low intonation throughout:



45. It's just the covers that are rotten.

It is particularly with the stressed-focus it-clefts that the term "presupposition" is appropriate, since in such sentences the constituent after that is something that is already known from context: in 45, that something is rotten is already known from the fact that the speaker is a bookbinder and from the generally-known fact that bookbinders get much of their work from repairing old books. What the sentence adds is the identification of the covers of books with what is rotten.

An example of an informative-presupposition it-cleft is found in 46 (Prince's 41a):

46. It was just about 50 years ago that Henry Ford gave us the weekend. On September 25, 1926, in a somewhat shocking move for that time, he decided to establish a 40-hour work week, giving his employees two days off instead of one. (a filler in the Philadelphia Bulletin, 1/3/76)

The informative-presupposition it-clefts are so called because the presupposition in them (that is, the part after that) is not really presupposed: it gives previously-unconveyed information. The informative-presupposition it-cleft is to be distinguished from the

stressed-focus it-cleft by differences in intonation: the informative-presupposition it-cleft does not generally have as strong a stress peak on the focus and does not have low intonation throughout the entire presupposition, but rather, has more or less normal intonation:



47. It was ... 50 years ago that H. F. gave us the weekend.

The two are also, it seems, distinguishable by differences in length: stressed-focus it-clefts tend to have both a shorter focus and a shorter presupposition than informative-presuppositional it-clefts.

It-clefts are used to pick out the focus of attention in an overt way. There are several reasons for doing this; in what follows I will describe two of them, one of which occurs in at least five subtypes, and then discuss why the form of the it-cleft is particularly suited to these functions. This listing of reasons accounts for all the occurrences of it-clefts in my corpus. We will see that all these functions are really all the same function, each in a different context -- they pick out the focus of attention. We will also see that in fact the stressed-focus it-cleft is not really different from the informative-presupposition it-cleft, and that it is in fact undesirable to distinguish between these two types of it-clefts because this does not take into account the fact that stressed-focus it-clefts function in exactly the same way as some informative-presupposition it-clefts: constraints that are operative throughout English determine the

differences we have noted between them.

I have found the following reasons for using an it-cleft:

1. to pick out a unique referent: the Unique-Referent It-Cleft
2. to regulate the topic (Topic-Regulating it-clefts). These occur in at least five contexts:
 - to introduce a passage: the Introduction It-Cleft
 - to launch from the introduction of an article into the main body: the Topic-Launching It-Cleft
 - to return from a tangent: the Tangent-Relevance It-Cleft (Type A)
 - to give the relevance of tangential information in the presupposition: the Tangent-Relevance It-Cleft (Type B)
 - to give the next step in the discussion: the Topic-Progress It-Cleft

Prince's "stressed-focus it-clefts" are all of the first type, but there are also informative-presupposition it-clefts of this type.

3.2.1 Unique-Referent It-Clefts

The point of Unique-Referent It-Clefts is to emphasize the identification of a referent. Example 44, repeated here, contains a Unique-Referent It-Cleft:

44. ...So I learned to sew books. They're really good books.
It's just the covers that are rotten.

This is an example of Prince's to exemplify her stressed-focus type of it-cleft. All stressed-focus it-clefts are Unique-Referent It-Clefts; the point of uttering the sentence is to specify the referent because there is a possible (rhetorical or real) or an actual misidentification. The it-cleft in 51 below is an example of a possible

rhetorical misidentification. The following (Borkin's 11) is an example of this type where there is an actual misidentification:

48. André Fontaine states [...] that the British shelled Damascus in 1975 in an attempt to drive French troops out of the city. This is simply not true. It was the French who shelled the city...

Since the reason for such a sentence is to utter a contrast, the normal intonation is the generally-recognized contrastive intonation, with extra stress on the element in contrast and low intonation on the rest of the sentence after the (last) point of contrast. This is the intonation of Prince's stressed-focus it-clefts. Further, since the reason for the sentence is to give the contrast, the rest of the sentence can be as short as possible, needed only to give the role of the unique referent in the total discourse topic.

However, it sometimes happens that more information is packed into the sentence. The following (Borkin's 12) is an example of this:

49. Among the butterworts some enzymes [...] are secreted by the stalked glands whose sticky exudate captures the insect prey, but it is the stalkless glands at the surface that furnish the main outflow of digestive fluid.

There is some contrast also here: stalkless glands is contrasted with stalked glands. But the presupposition part of the it-cleft is also used to add information, and so contrastive low intonation is not appropriate here.

In other examples of this type, the contrast is even more attenuated, at least in the sense that there is no overt entity that the

focus of the it-cleft is being contrasted with. Example 50 contains an it-cleft of this type:

50. The third "at risk" group in the defeatable-Reagan scenario, is the women's vote -- the gender-gap issue.

"Women are not as enamored of the macho foreign policy style as American men. They don't think it's the greatest thing in the world. They have more questions and concerns about the nuclear arms race, with the war and peace issues. It is only with respect to Reagan that there is the gender gap -- it is not," warns Yankelovich [pollster], "a general phenomenon." Women are uneasy, he says, [...] (Christian Science Monitor, 3/30/84)

Here there is contrast, perhaps, but it is a contrast between Reagan and "anything else political" -- not a very specific contrast.

A specific construction to emphasize the focus of attention is needed for when there is something unusual or unexpected about the focus of attention, in other words, when the focus of attention does not line up with the other characteristics of prototypical topics. In 44 and 48-50, the focus of attention is not given information (see also Prince 1978:896). The notion "given information" must be understood to mean that both a referent and the referent's role in the discourse topic are given. In cases of contrast there is more than one candidate for the given role in the discourse topic and so the referent which is asserted in the it-cleft is not given information in the sense that both it and its role in the discourse topic are given. In other cases, the speaker wants to remind the hearer of the role the focus of attention has in the discourse topic and put emphasis on it; rhetorically setting up a possible misidentification is one way of doing this. Such is the case in 51:

51. Weizman's main asset is that he remains one of Israel's most popular political figures. [... next paragraph:] He has proven political smarts, too. It was he who ran the Likud's 1977 electoral campaign, replacing decades of Labor rule with Menachem Begin's coalition.
Yet Weizman [...] (Christian Science Monitor, 3/30/84)

In the sentence preceding the it-cleft, and indeed in the whole preceding passage, Weizman is already the focus of attention. By putting the following sentence in the it-cleft form, the author sets Weizman up in a pseudo-contrast with all other possible candidates for the role left unexpressed in the presupposition, and then the referent is asserted to be the entity who was the focus of attention all along -- namely, Weizman.

3.2.2 Topic-Regulating It-Clefts

As we saw above, these it-clefts occur in five types:

- Introduction It-Cleft
- Topic-Launching It-Cleft
- Tangent-Relevance It-Cleft, Type A
- Tangent-Relevance It-Cleft, Type B
- Topic-Progress It-Cleft

We will look at Topic-Launching It-Clefts first, because the first type, Introduction It-Clefts, are more easily understandable when we have seen the behavior of some other types. Topic-Launching It-Clefts are used in a piece of written work as a transition between the introduction to the piece and the work proper. An example is the following:

52. In a nation where Buddhist nunneries supposedly closed down 800 years ago, Sister Indirani and others like her do quite well.
In fact, they do so well that monks in Sri Lanka are up in arms, reviving old charges of heresy against them.

Once an invisible minority, Buddhist nuns here have swelled to approximately 3,000 in the last decade and continue to grow as more Sri Lankan women take on new roles in the developing society.

The nuns represent a movement that may well change the face of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon). And it is the direction and growth of this grass-roots religious body that has become the unlikely focus of controversy.

Sister Indirani, for instance, [...] (Christian Science Monitor, 4/2/84)

In 52 I have given the entire introduction to the article preceding the it-cleft. In that introduction are given the beginning of an example and then some historical background. The it-cleft serves to cull out of that introduction the element that will be important for the rest of the article. The focus of the it-cleft is the focus of attention of the discourse topic that is given in outline in the focus and presupposition together. If the sentence had not been given in it-cleft form, as in 24,

24. ...The nuns represent a movement that may well change the face of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon). And the direction and growth of this grass-roots religious body has become the unlikely focus of controversy.

it would not be as clear that it was giving the discourse topic of the entire article -- although the prefacing and tends to give it that importance as well. The it-cleft form is more effective and the added and makes this result even more pronounced.

In 54 is an example of a Topic-Progress It-Cleft.

54. [Beginning of essay:]The water drainage system in Waldburg was pretty limited to one major stream which bisected Main Street. [...] At the bridge we would lie flat, our noses pressed against the damp wood the while the water gushed and swirled beneath us. [...]
[Second paragraph:] There was a guardian of the bridge,

who must be thanked for the fact that we arrived at school at all. Her name was Hester Quinlin, Miss Hester Quinlin, and her home stood just beside the bridge. [...]

[Third paragraph:] Hester lived with her aged mother and supported the two of them by sewing; she was an excellent seamstress, [...] and best of all, she could cut threads on her eyeteeth with twist and a twang. That was real professional expertise, in my book!

It was in the spring that Hester's life, which was normally self-contained and relatively placid, took on a new responsibility and purpose. Not only was she anxious, and rightly so, about the possibility of a flooded basement, but there were those little rascals who persisted in playing so dangerously close to the flooded waters at the edge of her yard.

The focus of the it-cleft in 54 mentions the point in which the two previous foci of the essay, the children at the bridge and Miss Hester Quinlin, come together in a dynamic way: in the spring of the year, with its floodwaters. The presupposition leads into what follows by giving an evaluation of it in general terms. This state of affairs contrasts with that of the previous example, in 52, where the presupposition of the it-cleft did not particularly lead into the immediately-following focus of attention. I do not think that this difference necessarily is a function of the fact that these two examples belong to different subtypes of the Topic-Regulating function of it-clefts; as I have mentioned above and as I will argue below, these are really different applications of the same use of it-clefts. Borkin has explained it this way (1984:128):

Clefts are structured so that the element in predicate (focus) position is the first (i.e. "leftmost") constituent that presents more lexical than grammatical content, and in the clefts I have examined, this lexical content typically contains some sort of "leftward" referential link to the immediately preceding sentence (and often to a larger section of immediately prior text, as well). Clefts are also structured so that the defocussed clause is at the end of the sentence, which is a good place for linking the sentence with following text; on the other hand, however, the presupposed nature of the defocussed clause naturally lends itself

to recalling PRIOR text.

We do not need to quibble with Borkin's assumption that the defocused clause (the "presupposition") is indeed presupposed since it is in fact defocused with respect to the focus, which is the important thing, and which makes it indeed useful for recalling prior text. The it-cleft in 52 exploits two of the possible functions of it-clefts, in Borkin's terms: the focus constitutes a link with the content of the immediately-preceding sentence (change the face of Buddhism <--> direction and growth of this [...] religious body) while the presupposition constitutes a link with earlier text (monks are up in arms <--> unlikely focus of controversy). The links, as you can see, are only approximate -- the it-cleft modifies the ideas of the preceding paragraphs in order to make them match the topic of the rest of the article more precisely. In 54 two functions of it-clefts are fulfilled also: the focus recalls (a large stretch of) immediately-preceding prior text (in fact, it unifies the two sections of it) whereas the presupposition launches the reader into the next section.

In 55 is Borkin's example of an it-cleft which fulfills all three functions. It is also an example of a Topic-Launching It-Cleft.

55. [Introduction]...In the past few years my colleagues and I ... have undertaken a different approach to fusion by inertial confinement. Instead of laser beams we have employed intense beams of electrons (and more recently ions) ...
[nine paragraphs later] ... Lasers, however, have two serious disadvantages: They are inefficient and they tend to be expensive ... There is much debate as to the ideal wavelength for a fusion laser, and a vigorous search is under way to develop efficient short-wavelength lasers. It was primarily the inefficiency of lasers that led to the present interest in beams of electrons or ions as pellet igniters.

The particle-beam approach to fusion has been made possible by the growth of pulsed-power technology...
(Scientific American, November 1978, page 53)

The focus, (it was) primarily the inefficiency of lasers, summarizes the immediately-preceding stretch of text; the presupposition recalls even earlier text and also leads into the main body of the article. The same state of affairs can be true of Tangent-Relevance It-Clefts, Type A, as in 56:

56. [The Chungs both work, and their child lives at a day-care center during the week.] The Chungs are one of China's new generation of nuclear families, which now account for almost 70 percent of the nation's households and which are changing the shape of family life in China.

Traditionally, Chinese society has been based on the extended family, with up to four generations all living under one roof. [...]

But in the decades following the 1949 Communist takeover, peasants and soldiers swarmed into China's cities from the countryside, setting up households of their own. It is the offspring of these families, who in the past decade have been forced to find their own accommodations on growing up, that now account for many of the city's nuclear families.

A rise in individual incomes and the greater availability of separate housing have encouraged other newly married couples to set up housekeeping on their own, according to China's leading sociology professor [...] (Christian Science Monitor, 3/22/84)

In the it-cleft in 56, the focus links up with the immediately-preceding sentence; the presupposition links up with something earlier -- just preceding the beginning of the tangent on the breakdown of the traditional Chinese family -- and at the same time links up with the following sentence.

In each of these cases, the Topic-Launching It-Cleft, the Topic-Progress It-Cleft, and the Tangent-Relevance It-Cleft Type A, though the presupposition may link up with the text in different ways,

the focus is always the same: it links up with what is immediately preceding, whether a sentence or a larger section of text, and picks out what is important. This is also the case with the Unique-Referent It-Cleft, where the question of the identity of the referent has been brought up in some way immediately before, as we saw in 44 and 48-51, pages 96-99 above. Thus the focus names the focus of attention that a writer wishes to derive explicitly from the immediately preceding section of text, and the presupposition relates some other aspect of the text to it: either something that came even earlier, or something that immediately follows (or both).

With the Introduction It-Clefts it is obvious that this characterization must be modified, since by definition the it-cleft is the first sentence in the passage. Example 46, repeated here, contains an example of an Introduction It-Cleft.

46. It was just about 50 years ago that Henry Ford gave us the weekend. On September 25, 1926, in a somewhat shocking move for that time, he decided to establish a 40-hour work week, giving his employees two days off instead of one.

I presume that these two sentences, from Prince 1978:898, are the whole filler. I found no examples of this type of it-cleft in my data, but Prince provides three more, two of which are given in 58 and 59 (Prince's 46a,b):

58. It was 10 years ago this month that young Irwin Vamplew was bopped on the head by a nightstick while smashing windows in Berkeley in order to end the war in Vietnam. So you can imagine the elation of his parents when he finally emerged this week from his decade-long coma.
His first words, naturally, were: "Down with the Establishment!"

59. It was just a year ago that the city's major banks launched ... the Philadelphia Mortgage Plan ... to foster investment in older neighborhoods.

Today, PMP is still in business and going strong. The thirteen ... banks ... have 1,037 mortgages in force for a total of \$10.7 million.

In each case, the focus of the Introduction It-Cleft contains a time reference. Why do three of the four Introduction It-Clefts that Prince gives have a time reference as their focus? I believe that the function of such it-clefts is to link the reader with the material. The writer takes one aspect of where he or she imagines the reader to be and links that with the following material -- the passage. One obvious way to do this is to link the material up with the reader's present location in time. Sometimes, as in Prince's remaining Introduction It-Cleft (her 47), time is not relevant because the passage does not deal with historical events. So the writer uses a name expected to be familiar to the readership:

60. It is through the writings of Basil Bernstein that many scientists have become aware of the scientific potential of sociolinguistics [...] Yet their very popularity has often deformed Bernstein's arguments; [...] he has been made to say that lower class children are linguistically "deprived" [...] In fact, Bernstein's views are much more complex than that. First, [...]

In each of these cases, then, an Introduction It-Cleft is intended to take the readers from where they are -- their current present or their current state of knowledge -- and to begin to build on that by introducing a discourse topic around the focus. It is then not the case that the focus of the it-cleft is intended to become the focus of attention of the following passage, but it is intended as an

intermediate focus, much as the foci used to identify an unfamiliar referent through familiar referents in spoken English (from Friedman 1976:143):

61. You know Sam? (pause) You know his sister? (pause) You know her husband, Burt? Well Burt's mother...

In this passage, first Sam, then Sam's sister, then Sam's sister's husband Burt are the foci of attention. But they are only intermediate foci leading to the ultimate focus of attention, Burt's mother. It is the same in these Introduction It-Clefts. The focus marks a focus of attention, but it is an intermediate focus of attention.

The Tangent-Relevance It-Cleft, Type B is somewhat different from Type A in that the tangent exists only in the presupposition of the it-cleft (which is then wholly unpresupposed). Borkin gives the example in 62 (her 10):

62. It was in this volume that B.J. Smith first introduced a theory of universal packaging that was to influence the packaging world for several decades.

In this case also, the focus picks out the important element of the tangent and is thus the focus of attention for the tangent. Borkin says[3]:

An author of a book review may plausibly view as of more interest the identification of the role of the book in a historical event than the fact of the event itself.

In each type of Topic-Regulating It-Cleft, then, the point is to pick out the focus of attention at points where it might get lost, such as at the end of a tangent or at a turning in the article. This is also

true with the Introduction It-Cleft where the focus is actually an intermediate focus. With the Unique-Referent It-Cleft, the focus picks out the focus of attention to emphasize the identity of the referent, about which there was some question, either rhetorically (as in the Weizman example in 51) or in fact.

3.2.3 Conclusion: It-Clefts and Speaker's Responsibility

Prince holds that informative-presuppositional it-clefts such as the one in 46 (page 94) above, repeated here as 63,

63. It was just about 50 years ago that Henry Ford gave us the weekend. On September 25, 1926, in a somewhat shocking move for that time, he decided to establish a 40-hour work week, giving his employees two days off instead of one.

are used to mark the amount of responsibility that a speaker wants to take for the assertion. Using an it-cleft implies that the information in the presupposition is generally known, even if not known to the addressee(s). Prince says about 44 (1978:898):

Were the first sentence not clefted, i.e. Fifty years ago, Henry Ford gave ..., it would seem as though the newspaper had just discovered (or were pretending to have discovered) the information in the that-clause; the it-cleft, in contrast, serves to mark it as a known fact, unknown only to the readership.

The effect of marking the information as an already-known fact is that the speaker reduces personal responsibility for the truth or originality of the assertion. As a result, according to Prince, informative-presupposition it-clefts (that is, those whose presuppositions contain new information and are not spoken with low intonation) are used by writers to reduce their responsibility for the

truth of the assertion. Prince's other examples do not give enough context for the reader to be able to independently ascertain the truth of this conclusion, but in all the data I have looked at it has been unnecessary, and even misleading, to invoke this putative use of it-clefts, as the reader can determine by going back over the examples in this section. Nevertheless, it seems to be indeed the case that the non-it-clefted version of the it-cleft in 63 would sound strange in that context and even, as Prince claims, would sound as if the newspaper had just discovered the fact. Why is this? Certainly the use of background information in any of the previous examples I have given here, such as 52 (page 99), for example, does not imply that the writer of the article just found out about it. We do not assume, in 52, that the writer just found out that "Buddhist nunneries supposedly closed down 800 years ago," nor do we assume, in 64, the beginning of a performance preview, that the writer has just found out about plays about Joan of Arc.

64. The story of Joan of Arc has been recounted in dramatic form by numerous playwrights including George Bernard Shaw and Jean Anouilh. Perhaps the most intense yet least performed St. Joan is Arthur Honegger's Jeanne d'Arc au Bucher (Joan of Arc at the Stake) 1938, a dramatic oratorio depicting the passion of St. Joan during the last moments of her life.
Jeanne d'Arc au Bucher will be performed [...] (The Daily Californian, 4/04/84)

It seems that for some reason the position of the temporal phrase is contributing to this sense of distance, if it exists at all. Note that although 65b sounds somewhat awkward, the problem noted with 65a does not exist:

- 65a. Just about 50 years ago, Henry Ford gave us the weekend. On September 25, 1926, in a somewhat shocking move for that

time, he decided to establish a 40-hour work week, giving his employees two days off instead of one.

- b. Henry Ford gave us the weekend just about 50 years ago. On September 25, 1926, he decided to establish a 40-hour work week, giving his employees two days off instead of one.

I conclude, therefore, that the use of it-clefts is not for writers to distance themselves from an assertion, as Prince suggests, and that in fact their function is as I have suggested here: to emphasize the focus of attention, either because its identity is in question, either in fact or rhetorically, or because otherwise the point of the assertion might get lost -- or, in the case of Introduction It-Clefts, to create a link between the reader and the passage.

3.3 Change-Property-Factoring

In this section I will discuss a type of property-factoring construction, that exemplified in 66a as opposed to 66b[4]:

- 66a. Rice went up in price.
- b. The price of rice went up.

The subject of the (b) sentence is a possessive NP, and the subject of the (a) sentence is the possessor of the subject of the (b) sentence; and the head noun of the subject of the (b) sentence appears at the end of the sentence in an in-phrase. Since there are other property-factoring constructions, and I am in fact discussing another one in this dissertation (Section 4.3), I will call this type of property-factoring construction the "Change-Property-Factoring construction," or "ChangePF" for short, since all the verbs involved in this construction seem to

denote a change in the referent of the possessive NP which is in the subject of the non-ChangePF sentence, and which is distributed over the subject and the prepositional phrase in the ChangePF sentence.

Other examples of ChangePF sentences are found in the (a) sentences of 67, 68 and 69:

- 67a. Sydney increased in weight.
b. Sydney's weight increased.
- 68a. The factory improved in production.
b. The factory's production improved.
- 69a. Instant coffee has improved immensely in flavor.
b. The flavor of instant coffee has improved immensely.

The question I will address in this section is: Why does a speaker use a sentence exemplifying ChangePF rather than a sentence not exemplifying but susceptible to this construction (a non-ChangePF sentence)? My assumption is that the choice of a ChangePF or a non-ChangePF sentence depends on what NP a speaker wants to have in subject position, and that therefore the choice depends on factors associated with subjecthood. ChangePF sentences are used when the primary of the verb, a possessive NP, is not the sentence topic but that the possessor in the possessive NP is. If this is the case, then it is clear that this construction, as well, has a prototype for its subject which is a nonprototypical version of the prototypical subject for basic sentences: the primary is an aspect of the Representor; the sentence topic is not the primary but the Representor of the primary. For example, in 66a and 66b the primary of the verb go up is the price of rice. An example of a scene in which this sentence might be used is the commodities market, and rice would,

in this context, be a Representor of this scene. The primary the price of rice is then an aspect of the Representor rice. Sentence 66a, exemplifying ChangePF, would then be used when rice is a better sentence topic than the price of rice; sentence 66b, not exemplifying ChangePF, would be used when the opposite was the case.

3.3.1 Other Types of Property-Factoring Sentences

There is another construction which has been designated by the name "property-factoring," and which is exemplified in 70a as opposed to 70b:

- 70a. My cat amused me with her antics.
- b. My cat's antics amused me.

Here, too, the subject of the (b) sentence is a possessive NP, and the subject of the (a) sentence is the possessor of the subject of the (b) sentence; the head noun of the subject of the (b) sentence appears at the end of the sentence in a with-phrase. Some other examples are found in the (a) parts of 71 to 73, to be compared to their (b) counterparts:

- 71a. The man exasperated his neighbors with his singing.
- b. The man's singing exasperated his neighbors.
- 72a. The girl startled her mother with her sudden appearance.
- b. The girl's sudden appearance startled her mother.
- 73a. My colleague intimidated me with her attitude.
- b. My colleague's attitude intimidated me.

In this type of property-factoring sentence and its non-property-factored counterpart, the head of the possessive is usually an activity though it can also be an attribute, as is always the case with ChangePF sentences (an example is 73a). I will call sentences of the (a) type in

70-73 Psychological-Property- Factoring or PsychPF sentences. We will discuss this type of property-factoring sentence in Section 4.3 below.

In what follows, I will call the noun (phrase) which occurs in the prepositional phrase at the end of a ChangePF or PsychPF sentence, and which corresponds to the head of the subject in non-ChangePF or non-PsychPF sentences, the "factored noun (phrase)," and let the "raised noun" be the noun which occurs as the subject of ChangePF and PsychPF sentences, the possessor in non-ChangePF and non-PsychPF sentences.

Structurally, there are only two things that the two constructions have in common: first, a sentence susceptible to PsychPF or ChangePF has as subject a possessive noun phrase; second, a sentence exemplifying either construction has the erstwhile possessor as subject while the erstwhile head of the possessive construction occurs at the end of the sentence in a prepositional phrase. But in spite of these similarities between the two sets of sentences, there are great differences between them as well. First of all, different types of verbs occur in PsychPF as opposed to ChangePF sentences. In PsychPF the verb is a psychological verb, like exasperate, amuse, annoy, charm, enchant, infuriate, anger, amaze and others. In ChangePF the verb is a verb indicating change, like go up, go down, increase, decrease, improve, darken, double and others. These two verbal categories are discrete, with no overlap. Second, the prepositional phrase in PsychPF differs from that in ChangePF, in two ways. The preposition used is different, for one thing: in PsychPF with is used, which is also used for instrumentals as in 74:

74. John sliced the salami with his knife.

In ChangePF in is used, which is also used for prepositional phrases of "respect in which," as in 75:

75. He is good in music.

The prepositional phrases in PsychPF and ChangePF also differ in that in PsychPF but not in ChangePF sentences, a resumptive possessive pronoun is used so that, in effect, the entire subject NP of the non-PsychPF sentence is represented in the prepositional phrase. This is not possible in ChangePF, as is shown in 76:

- 76a. *Rice went up in its price.
- b. *Sydney increased in his weight.
- c. *The factory improved in its production.
- d. *Instant coffee has improved immensely in its flavor.

Contrariwise, PsychPF sentences are not possible without the resumptive possessive pronoun:

- 77a. *The kitten amused me with antics.
- b. *The man exasperated his neighbors with singing.
- c. *The girl startled her mother with appearance.
- d. *My colleague intimidated me with attitude.

The third way in which PsychPF differs from ChangePF is that in ChangePF the factored noun designates an attribute, such as, in our examples, price, weight (level of) production or flavor, whereas in PsychPF the factored noun can designate either an attribute, as in 73a, repeated here, or 78a,

- 73a. My colleague intimidated me with her attitude.
- b. My colleague's attitude intimated me.

- 78a. The man horrified me with his appearance.
- b. The man's appearance horrified me.

or an activity, such as antics, singing or a sudden appearance (on the scene), as in 70, 71 and 72, repeated here:

- 70a. The kitten amused me with her antics.
- b. The kitten's antics amused me.
- 71a. The man exasperated his neighbors with his singing.
- b. The man's singing exasperated his neighbors.
- 72a. The girl startled her mother with her sudden appearance.
- b. The girl's sudden appearance startled her mother.

In addition, the factored noun of a PsychPF sentence can designate something which is neither an attribute nor an activity, but which stands in a relation of part to whole to the raised noun, as in 79:

- 79a. The piano's broken key exasperated me.
- b. The piano exasperated me with its broken key.

But there are to my knowledge no ChangePF sentences in which the factored noun designates something other than an attribute[5].

The fourth way PsychPF differs from ChangePF is that the subject in PsychPF tends to be potentially agentive whereas in ChangePF either potentially agentive nouns like Sydney or non-agentive nouns like rice can be subject. By a potentially agentive noun I mean one whose referent can be the agent of the action expressed in the predicate, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter. The tendency of PsychPF subjects to be agents is, however, just that: a tendency. PsychPF subjects can be potentially non-agentive, as 80 shows:

- 80a. Mary's mother amused her with her stories.
- b. Mary's cat amused her with her antics.
- c. That chair annoyed me with its creaking.

A sentence like 80c shows that a non-potentially agentive noun can be the subject of a PsychPF sentence.

Although ChangePF sentences do allow potential agents in subject position, this is incidental. A ChangePF sentence like 67a, repeated here,

- 67a. Sydney increased in weight.
- b. Sydney's weight increased.

does not impute volition, intentionality, control or even responsibility to the subject for the state of affairs expressed by the predicate. Sydney is not an agent noun in 67a, even though Sydney is a potential agent, that is, he might be an agent in another sentence like "Sydney hit the ball" or "Sydney amused me with his stories." Since subjects in PsychPF sentences tend to be agentive whereas those in ChangePF sentences are not, the use of the instrumental preposition with and a resumptive pronoun is more appropriate there than it would be in ChangePF sentences, since these two mechanisms underscore the similarity of PsychPF sentences with regular agentive sentences containing an instrumental, such as 74 above (page 112).

To summarize, there are four ways in which ChangePF sentences differ from PsychPF sentences:

- The referent of the subject is not potentially agentive, or, if it is, it is only incidentally so; its potential agentivity is not relevant in the ChangePF sentence

- the verb denotes a change in the referent of its primary (the referent of the possessor NP, the subject of the non-ChangePF sentence)
- there is an in-prepositional phrase with a bare NP as its object which is the head of the possessor NP subject of the corresponding non-ChangePF sentence
- the bare NP in the in-prepositional phrase is an attribute of the subject

There are numerous other constructions which also evidence a type of property-factoring. Some of these are exemplified in 80 through 85:

- 80a. Manfred was laughable in/on account of his credulity.
 b. Manfred's credulity was laughable.

- 81a. Manfred was criticized for his credulity.
 b. Manfred's credulity was criticized.

- 82a. The cat got into trouble for her antics.
 b. The cat's antics got her into trouble.

- 83a. Jan got better at acting.
 b. Jan's acting got better.

- 84a. The cherries are dark in color.
 b. ?The color of the cherries is dark.

- 85a. The car is low in oil.
 b. ?The car's oil is low{6}.

In each of the pairs 80 to 85, the subject of the (b) sentence contains a possessive NP, the head of which occurs in a prepositional phrase at the end of the (a) sentence while the possessor of the (b) sentence has subject status in the (a) sentence. The characteristics of these types of property-factoring sentences, including how many different classes of them there are and what restrictions hold on them, are still mysterious. I will lump all these different types into one category OtherPF, and concentrate on PsychPF and ChangePF sentences, if for no other reason than that these were the types first discovered and called "property-factoring" in the transformational tradition. I will,

however, return briefly to OtherPF sentences at the end of section 4.3[7].

3.3.2 The Uses of Change-Property-Factoring Sentences

First a note of warning. Very few of the examples in this section will offer cut-and-dried proof for my claims. I think this is because even if a speaker does not answer a question directly, their interlocutor will assume they are being relevant and will cast about for some way of adjusting their understanding of the speaker's utterance so that it becomes relevant (Grice 1975). The indirect response is acceptable as long as its relevance can be deciphered.

When does a speaker use ChangePF and when is a non-ChangePF sentence more appropriate? In 86 and 87 are some examples in which there is a difference in acceptability between ChangePF and non-ChangePF sentences:

- 86 How come John is looking so glum?
 [N.B. John is a farmer in Illinois, something both
 interlocutors know.]
 a. The price of soybeans has gone way down.
 b. ??Soybeans have gone way down in price.
- 87 What's a good thing to invest in in the commodities market?
 a. ?The price of rice has gone up.
 b. Rice has gone up in price.

In 86, the non-ChangePF sentence is more acceptable as a response than the ChangePF sentence. A discourse topic initiated by the question is John's glumness. Assuming that this is the first time John is mentioned

in the conversation, this question also evokes the schema of John's farming activities, along with everything associated with it, including soybeans and the price of soybeans, since the answer has to do with his farming activities. Although John is the Representor both of the scene of John's glumness and his farming schema, the cause of John's glumness is not the soybeans themselves but the price of the soybeans. In such a case, the price of soybeans can be made the subject of the sentence but soybeans alone cannot. In 87, on the other hand, the ChangePF sentence sounds preferable to the non-ChangePF sentence. Assuming that the question in 87 is the first sentence in the discourse dealing with the commodities market, the sentence evokes the scene of the commodities market and the Representor is the range of good things to invest in in the commodities market. Rice is an example of this Representor, the price of rice is not; and rice is a better subject than the price of rice. Less elliptically, the utterer of the response in 87 might have uttered 88b but not 88a:

88. Rice is a good thing to invest in since
a. *its price has gone up.
b. it has gone up in price.

It seems from these examples that a ChangePF sentence can be used rather than its non-ChangePF counterpart when the raised noun is the Representor of a discourse topic, including being an example of the Representor when it is a variable as with what? The point of ChangePF is to free up a possessor noun to be the subject when it is the Representor of the discourse topic or an example of the Representor. ChangePF is thus used to accomplish a better match between sentence topic and

subject position.

Another set of examples is found in 89 and 90. These are monologue sequences rather than dialogue sequences as in 86 and 87:

89. Researchers must have been working hard on instant coffee lately.
a. Its flavor has improved immensely.
b. ??It has improved immensely in flavor.
90. Some convenience foods have become quite palatable.
a. ?The flavor of instant coffee has improved immensely over the past few years.
b. Instant coffee has improved immensely in flavor over the past few years.

The second sentence of the monologue in 89 gives evidence for why the speaker thinks the first sentence is true. The discourse topic evoked by the first sentence is that of researchers working in a laboratory on instant coffee. Instant coffee is the Representor; researchers can become the subject even though they are not topical because they are more agentive, as I have discussed in previous sections. The epistemic modal must triggers an expectation of a reason for the opinion: something about instant coffee that makes one think it has been worked on lately. In other words, a subordinate-level topic would be in place here, and so 89a is more acceptable than 89b. In 90, on the other hand, the discourse topic is convenience foods, and instant coffee is an example of a convenience food. So the basic level is a better level for a topic than the subordinate level, and 90b is a better continuation than 90a.

In 91 and 92 we see another set of examples.

.

91. Will you look at what has happened to the local paper!
- a. ?Its appearance has really improved.
 - b. It has really improved in appearance.
92. I don't know what could get this paper moving again, but at least
- a. its appearance has really improved.
 - b. ?it has really improved in appearance.

In 91 the paper is the Representor of the discourse topic and, being a basic-level topic, is a good sentence topic as well. To gratuitously move to a subordinate-level topic as in 91a would be changing the focus of attention unnecessarily. In 92, on the other hand, what points to a variable that is an aspect of the basic-level object the paper: so the subordinate-level object its appearance is an appropriate sentence topic.

ChangePF sentences can thus be used rather than their non-ChangePF counterparts when the raised noun is an appropriate sentence topic. In other words, the primary (the possessor NP in the corresponding non-ChangePF sentence, which is, remarkably enough, spread over two constituents in the ChangePF sentence) is not an appropriate sentence topic and so the sentence topic and the primary do not overlap in situations where a ChangePF sentence is appropriate. This construction thus also has a prototype for its subject which is a nonprototypical version of the prototypical subject for basic sentences: the sentence topic overlaps with the Representor of the scene but this entity does not overlap with the primary, which, instead, is an aspect of the Representor and the referent of the sentence topic.

NOTES

- 1 This section is a revised version of a paper presented at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (Van Oosten 1978c).
- 2 These are then other uses of what Lakoff (1984) calls the Central Existential, not mentioned by him: to make the hearer aware that the speaker is aware of the existence of the referent of the NP; and to make a comment on the existence of the referent of the NP.
- 3 This is the only example there is of this type and it is, I believe though I cannot be sure, made-up, and without context. However, the example and Borkin's discussion of it are plausible enough that I have added it to the list and await the discovery of further examples.
- 4 This section and Section 4.3 together are a revised version of a paper presented at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, and published as Van Oosten 1980.
- 5 There are pairs of sentences like 83 (of type OtherPF, which will be discussed below), repeated here for convenience,

- (i)a Jan's acting got better.
- b Jan got getter at acting.

which are obviously closely related to ChangePF sentences in general, especially in the fact the verb is a change-of-state verb, and the subject in the (a) sentence is a possessive NP, of which the possessor is the subject in the (b) sentence and the head noun is factored out into a prepositional phrase. The use of the preposition at seems to be related to the presence of an activity rather than an attribute; when a sentence like (i)a, with get better, contains an attribute, the related ChangePF sentence will contain in:

- (ii)a Jan's acting ability got better.
- b Jan got better in acting ability.

This at is probably also related to the at discussed in Ross 1969, found in such sentences as (iii):

- (iii) John was polishing shoes when I left, and he was still at it when I got back.

- 6 The syntactic reasons why 84 and 85 are not ChangePF sentences will become clear later, when the properties of PsychPF and ChangePF

sentences are discussed in greater detail: in brief, their verb does not designate a change in the possessor NP as the verbs of ChangePF sentences do.

- 7 A class of sentences closely related to PsychPF sentences but differing from them in intonation, is exemplified by (i):

- (i)a That chair annoys me, with its ripped upholstery and its springs sticking out.
- b John bothered me, with his constant talk about an imminent holocaust.

Such sentences, as well as PsychPF sentences, are closely related to sentences like those in (ii):

- (ii)a That chair annoyed me.
- b John bothered me.

I will not be dealing with these types of sentences here. Not all the conclusions made about PsychPF sentences are transportable to the types of sentences illustrated in (i) and (ii). In particular, although a PsychPF sentence forces a more agentive reading if the subject is a potential agent, as we will see in Section 4.3, this is not true of the classes illustrated in (i) and (ii). That is, the subject John in (i)b, though a potential agent, may be case-grammar object (Cook 1979:64) rather than an agent. This is shown by the ability of such sentences to appear with the simple present tense (associated with stativity), as in the dialogue in (iii):

- (iii) A: Why don't you like John?
- B: He bothers me, with his constant talk about an imminent holocaust.

Their inability to appear with a progressive tense (associated with non-stativity), as in (iv), shows that the subject cannot have an agentive reading (under this intonation):

- (iv) A: What is John doing?
- B: *He is bothering Mary, with his constant talk of an imminent holocaust.

Without the parenthetical with-phrase, as in (ii)b, a sentence of form with a potential agent in subject position is ambiguous but can be disambiguated by context and the choice of tense:

- (v) A: Why don't you like John?
- B: He bothers me.
- (vi) A: What is John doing?
- B: He is bothering Mary.

See also the Introduction, page 22.

Chapter 4

Prototype Agents

Lakoff 1977:244 has suggested that there are basic, prototypical agent-action-patient sentences. Based on that and subsequent work, the prototypical agent is held to have the following properties:

1. The agent does something
2. The agent brings about a change in the patient
3. The agent's action is volitional and intentional
4. The agent has primary responsibility for the action and the resulting change, that is, the resulting change would not have come about without the action of the agent
5. The agent is the energy source, that is, nothing is acting on the agent to cause the agent to bring about the resulting change
6. The agent is singular and specific
7. The agent uses own hands, body or some instrument
8. The agent is looking at the patient during the action.
9. The agent is human
10. The agent experiences the action

Such an agent occurs in prototypical agent-action-patient sentences like those in 1:

- 1a. The farmer killed the duckling.
- b. John hit the ball.
- c. Mary broke the glass.

There are other basic sentences where the agent deviates somewhat from this norm: it can be plural, or nonhuman,

- 2a. The farmers killed the duckling.
- b. The dog killed the duckling.
- c. The car killed the duckling.

or the change in the patient can be not perceptible to the eye, or not irrevocable,

- 3a. Mary bought the book.
- b. Mary touched the book.

or the patient is not specific or there is no patient, engendering a reduction in the agent's agentivity as well (see Hopper and Thompson 1980):

- 4a. Mary bought some things.
- b. Mary left.

Another way that agentivity is reduced is by a reduction in intentionality or responsibility. Thus the agent in 5 is less agentive than the agent in 1a:

- 5. The farmer unknowingly killed the duckling when she backed her car over it.

(I daresay that was not the image of the event the reader had in mind, in various respects, when first confronted with 1a!)

In basic sentences with human agents and prototypical actions, intentionality and responsibility are related. When the farmer of 5 unintentionally kills the duckling by backing her car over it, she also loses some of her responsibility for the event. Specifically, she cannot be blamed for the event, and blame is a part of responsibility. Nevertheless, primary responsibility for the event still lies with the farmer. When the agent is not human or the action is not prototypical, also, there is no question of blame but primary responsibility remains.

Thus the car of 2c,

2c. The car killed the duckling.

is asserted as having the primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate -- without its action (though "movement" would perhaps be a better term for an entity without intentionality) the action of the predicate would not have occurred -- though the car cannot be blamed. With psychological (active) predicates the subject always has primary responsibility for the occurrence of the predicate, though blame occurs only if there is intentionality. Thus there can be a question of blame in 6a, where there is asserted to be intentionality, but not in 6b:

6a. Quit walking around annoying me.

b. The cat annoys me, with her constant meowing.

In this chapter we will look at three special constructions that mention subject, and whose subject picks out a subset of the prototypical agent properties. The patient-subject construction, exemplified in 7,

7. The book is selling like hotcakes.

picks out the attributes of energy source and responsibility as attributes of the subject. In the case of an entity without intentionality, as the book, "energy source" must be interpreted metaphorically, just as the sentence itself is: what a sentence like 7 asserts is that no agent is needed to act on the referent of the subject for the action of the predicate to occur. It is in that sense that the

subject -- the book -- is the energy source: it is asserted to have independence of action. In addition, by saying 7 one asserts that some property of the book is responsible for the occurrence of the action of the predicate -- its quality, for example, or the fact that it is a fad book. In other cases, there is no sense of responsibility, only independence of action:

8 A: You didn't leave enough of a margin on the bottom of this page.

B: No, it just photocopied too low.

B's assertion implies that the page has the primary responsibility for the fact that it photocopied too low, rather than, for example, the person who did the photocopying -- the agent -- or the photocopying machine -- the instrument.

The Tough-Construction is a little more complex, though it also turns on the notion of responsibility. In this construction, there is a situation, perhaps a general one, or an event, and a judgment on that situation or event; and the subject is asserted to be responsible for the truth of the judgment on the situation or event. For example:

9. This cake was a breeze to bake.

The "situation or event" in this case is the event of baking the cake; the judgment is that baking the cake was a breeze, and the assertion is that something about the cake made it a breeze -- the simplicity of the ingredients, for example. A sentence like 10

10. It was a breeze to bake this cake.

asserts the same thing as 9 except that nothing is asserted about what is responsible for the truth of the judgment. It could have been something about the cake, such as the simplicity of the ingredients, but it could also have been a new utensil or appliance.

The third construction is more complex still. This is the Psychological-Property-Factoring construction, with a psychological verb and usually an action property but sometimes also an attribute property. An example of this construction is found in 11a, which is to be compared with 11b:

- 11a. That man alarmed me with his threats/angry scowl.
- b. That man's threats/angry scowl alarmed me.

When a speaker says 11a, the same is said as in 11b with in addition the assertion that the subject intended the result of the predicate or at least had primary responsibility for the occurrence of the predicate. This assertion is not present in 11b for the subject of 11a.

Each of these constructions has as its prototype subject a nonprototypical subset of the agent properties of a prototypical subject of a basic sentence, as we will see in the sections below.

4.1 Patient-Subject Sentences

In patient-subject sentences the subject is semantically a patient of the verb or holds some other semantic relation to the verb, while the verb is active and is of the type that generally has an agent in subject

position when active[1]. Examples are found in 12, where the subjects are semantically patients. All are actually-attested examples:

- 12a. (Instant cereal advertisement:) Prepares in your bowl...instantly.
- b. (from a dog kibble advertisement:) ...cuts like meat, chews like meat.
- c. I think that's silver...it polishes up like silver.
- d. A good tent puts up in about two minutes.

Normally the subject in each of the sentences above would be expressed as a direct object in a sentence which had an agent as subject. Compare the sentences in 12 with their counterparts in 13, where the semantic relations correspond to more normal syntactic relations:

- 13a. You can prepare this instant cereal in your bowl, and it will be ready instantly.
- b. You can cut this dog kibble as if it were meat, and you can chew it as if it were meat.
- c. I think that's silver. When you polish it, it behaves like silver and the result is like silver.
- d. You can put a good tent up in about two minutes.

Although this construction is called the patient-subject construction, the fact is that the subjects of such sentences can bear other normal relations to the verb than patient, as is demonstrated in 14:

- 14a. (Sign on a cake pan:) Aluminum bakes higher, browns more evenly, because it conducts the heat just right.
- b. This music dances better than the other one [i.e., piece of music]
...We'll just have to see how the other piece dances.
- c. It chops, it slices, it dices! Call now ... operators standing by.

Aluminum in 14a is a type of locative; its more normal manifestation in a sentence would be as in 15a; this music would normally be expressed in

a prepositional phrase headed by to, as in 15b; and the appliance which is subject in 14c is actually an instrument rather than an agent, as in 15c:

- 15a. In aluminum cake pans, you can bake higher cakes that are browned evenly.
- b. You can dance better to this music than you can to the other piece.
...We'll just have to see how well one can dance to the other piece of music.
- c. With this appliance you can chop, slice or dice [vegetables].

Although the subject in this construction does not, then, need to be a patient but can be an instrument or a locative or hold some other relation to the verb, I will for simplicity continue to call this the patient-subject construction and will, when I have occasion to speak of the semantic role of these subjects in general, call them 'the patient,' even though in fact such a noun can have some other relation to the verb.

In this section I will show that the various types of patient-subject sentences occur because the role of any true agent is irrelevant, that is, it is considered to be irrelevant by the speaker for the purposes of this assertion. To put a non-agent in subject position in an active sentence is to imply that there is no true agent. When there is no agent with these verbs that generally do have an agent in the frame, the patient subject takes on a property typically associated with agents: responsibility of a property, or independence of action. By "responsibility of a property" I mean that the occurrence of the event or the coming about of the situation depends on some property of the entity that is responsible: it would not happen or come about

were it not for some property of the responsible entity. For example, in 1a above, repeated here,

12a. [A type of instant cereal] prepares in your bowl ...
instantly.

some property of the instant cereal is responsible for the fact that it is so easily prepared. "Independence of action" is a related but separate notion: it means that the effort and force that brings the situation or event about originate with the entity which does not receive it from any other source. An entity with independence of action is thus the energy source of the action of the predicate. Being the energy source is, as we have seen, a property of agents. Independence-of-Action Patient-Subject sentences thus exhibit another, lesser way in which a patient can take over an agent property in a patient- subject sentence, since responsibility entails independence of action, but independence of action does not entail responsibility. Thus in all patient-subject sentences which convey the idea that some property of the subject is responsible for the possibility of the occurrence of the predicate, the subject is also implied to have independence of action. In 12a, for example, the implication is that the instant cereal by itself, without the intervention of an agent, can bring it about that it instantly becomes ready to eat. (That the reality is not like that is quite irrelevant. We are dealing here with the assertion rather than what is really true.) In 16, on the other hand, there is no notion that some property of the the subject this idea is responsible for the action of the predicate but only that it does not need an agent to bring the action of the predicate about:

16. Let's see how this idea communicates on film.

It is almost as if the speaker thinks that the idea might have its own volition and could do anything it likes and can communicate itself on film in any way it likes. It may, in reality, be the case that some property of the idea is responsible for how it communicates on film, but this is not what is conveyed. The situation is the same with true agents. It may also be that some property of a human being is responsible for something he or she does, but we don't necessarily choose to see the event that way. Instead, we see the event as the agent having the choice of what he or she does and choosing to do the action of the predicate.

4.1.1 Two Types of Patient-Subject Sentences

These are the two general types of patient-subject sentences: one type conveys the notion that some property of the patient is responsible for the situation or event in the predicate, and that consequently the patient has independence of action; and the other type only conveys that the patient has independence of action. The examples in 12 and 14 are all of the responsibility type of patient-subject sentences, whereas 16 is an example of a patient-subject sentence where there is no idea that some property of the subject is responsible for the action of the predicate (when it does come about), but only that no agent is needed for the action of the predicate to come about: the source of the energy

is the subject itself -- this idea. These two types of patient-subject sentences seem to be in complementary distribution; I have found no sentences which are ambiguous between the two types of meanings, though the boundary between the two is vague. But a study of the parameters determining whether a sentence will be interpreted in the one way or the other remains to be done.

4.1.1.1 Responsibility Patient-Subject Sentences

In sentence 1a the instant cereal is responsible for the action of the predicate because some property of the instant cereal brings its ease of preparation about. I repeat 12a here along with 13a, its agent-subject counterpart.

12a. (Instant Cereal advertisement:) Prepares in your bowl ...
instantly.

13a. You can prepare this instant cereal in your bowl, and it will
be ready instantly.

Whether there is an agent around or not, the instant cereal will have this property. This is then an example of a Responsibility Patient-Subject Sentence: a patient-subject sentence which conveys the idea that some property of the patient is responsible for the occurrence of the action of the predicate. The tense of the sentence is simple present, used for gnomic statements and other timeless truths. Patient-subject sentences are very frequently in the simple present tense to indicate a general truth rather than an actual occurrence,

because in an actual occurrence, of course, an agent is necessary for the occurrence as well as the property of the patient, and a speaker of English is required to acknowledge this fact. Thus it is impossible to say 17:

17. *My cereal prepared in my bowl while I rinsed off a spoon.

I should not leave the impression, however, that patient-subject sentences can never occur in non-gnomic contexts, because they can, particularly in progressive contexts but also in punctual ones. We will see some examples below.

A second point of interest in 12a is the following. Note the contortions I had to go through in 13a in order to get the adverb instantly to relate to the rest of the sentence in the same way as it does in 12a. The simplicity of the adverb in 12a is an indication that there is indeed no agent at all in the sentence, neither "underlyingly" nor understood. This is because the adverb instantly modifies the most agentive entity of a sentence, whether it is overt or understood. (This is the same as the "willingly test" of Lakoff 1970, about which I will have more to say below.) Thus not only in 18a, with an active verb and an agent in subject position, but also in 18b, with a passive verb and the agent not mentioned, instantly modifies the action of the true agent:

- 18a. I prepared his cereal instantly.
- b. When the king asked for his cereal, it was prepared instantly.

In 18a,b, instantly refers to how long the agent(s) took to get to

preparing the cereal -- something that depends on the agent. The actual preparation of the cereal could have taken a long or a short time after that, depending on properties of the cereal. In 12a, however, instantly refers to how long the process takes once an agent has set it in motion -- something that depends on properties of the patient.

Let us now discuss 12b with its counterpart 13b, also a case where a property of the patient subject is responsible for the action of the predicate. I repeat 12b and 13b here:

12b. [A certain dog kibble] cuts like meat, chews like meat.

13b. You can cut this dog kibble as if it were meat, and you can chew it as if it were meat.

Two facts leap to the eye about 13b: first, that the adverbial elements in this version do not quite convey the same thing as 12b, and second, that it seems wrong to have you as the subject of the second clause because it does not convey the fact that the agent of the second clause is most likely of canine persuasion. Sentence 12b does not have this problem. The adverbial elements of 13b do not quite convey the same thing as those in 12b because in 13b the ways in which you can cut kibble have to do with the agent's point of view: the type of knife used, for example. In 12b, on the other hand, what is relevant is the texture and the hardness of the kibble: properties of the patient, in short. Again, the adverbial modifies the most agentive thing in the sentence; in this case that is the patient subject. So the patient has taken on agent properties and is responsible for the action of the predicate. You does not seem an appropriate subject for the second

clause of 13b for two reasons: first, it makes it sound as if the agent of the first clause could be the same as the agent of the second clause, and it makes it sound as if the agent of the second clause could be a human being. Under normal circumstances this is not so, and, more to the point, this is not at all what is conveyed in 1b. This second observation about 13b thus also points to the fact that in 12b the agent is totally absent -- in fact, irrelevant: it is only properties of the patient that are relevant for the action of the predicate; this is the assertion of the sentence.

The central property of patient-subject sentences is that an agent is irrelevant. When this is not a possible interpretation of the state of affairs, then a patient-subject sentence is not appropriate, even when it is the case that properties of the patient enable the action of the predicate. Compare 12b with the following:

- 19a. *Rover's kibble doesn't need to cut.
- b. *It doesn't even need to chew, the pieces are so small.

By including need to, one is bringing in an agent: the need to cut or chew lies with an agent, and criteria determining the need to cut or chew also lie with an agent. So, because need to brings in an agent, the patient-subject form is inappropriate and neither 8a nor 8b is possible in patient-subject form.

Sentence 13c, the agent-subject counterpart to 12c, both repeated here,

12c. I think that's silver ... it polishes up like silver.

- 13c. I think that's silver. When you polish it, it behaves like silver and the result is like silver.

exhibits the same problems as 13b in conveying, in an agent-subject clause, the exact meaning of an adverb phrase in the patient-subject sentence. This is because the adverb phrase like silver compares properties of silver with properties of the patient subject; what is relevant about the subject is the properties that enable the action of the predicate to occur. Again, the adverb phrase modifies the most agent-like entity in the sentence, whether overt or understood: the patient subject.

Sentence 13d, the agent-subject counterpart to 12d,

- 12d. A good tent puts up in about two minutes.

- 13d. You can put a good tent up in about two minutes.

does not have the problems encountered in 13a-c, for two reasons: first, the agent you is very general, so no properties of the agent can be being invoked for the action of the predicate. The only property the indefinite subject you has is that it refers to a human. (This is one of the problems with the second you in 13b, the dog kibble example; another problem is that the most usual interpretation of two you's in the same sentence is that they refer to the same person.) The second reason that the fit is better between 12d and 13d lies in the type of adverb phrase: two minutes for the tent is two minutes for the agent. Unlike instantly in 13a, the time period refers to the time taken from beginning to put the tent up to finishing, rather than the time involved in getting ready to begin the task. Why this should be so is a question

about time adverbials, answering which is thankfully beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Similarly for the "patient"-subject sentences in 14, repeated here,

- 14a. (Sign on a cake pan:) Aluminum bakes higher, browns more evenly, because it conducts the heat just right.
- b. This music dances better than the other one.
...We'll just have to see how the other piece dances.
- c. It chops, it slices, it dices! Call now ... operators standing by.

where the subject has a non-agent, non-patient relation to the active verb. Again, the subject has taken over the agent property of responsibility and any agent is irrelevant. Agent-subject counterparts in 15, repeated here,

- 15a. In aluminum cake pans, you can bake higher cakes that are browned evenly.
- b. You can dance better to this music than you can to the other piece.
...We'll just have to see how well one can dance to the other piece of music.
- c. With this appliance you can chop, slice or dice [vegetables].

show the same problems the agent-subject counterparts in 13 did, as the reader can personally ascertain.

4.1.1.2 Independence-of-Action Patient-Subject Sentences

In 20a is an example of a patient-subject sentence where what is important is not so much properties of the patient's having

responsibility for the action of the predicate as the patient's having independence of action: no agent is required for the patient to bring the action of the predicate about.

- 20a. This Christmas...
Enjoy gift wrapping the easy, organized way
...with a complete "home wrapping center" that stores in its own caddy.
- b. ...with a complete "home wrapping center" that you can store in its own caddy.
- c. ...with a complete "home wrapping center" that is stored in its own caddy.

This is an example of an Independence-of-Action Patient-Subject sentence: where what is conveyed is the notion that the occurrence of the action of the predicate does not need an agent to bring it about. Although one could construe a property of the "home wrapping center" that would be responsible for the fact that it can be stored in its very own caddy -- namely, that it has just the right number, shape and size of components to fit into the caddy -- in fact this does not seem to be what is being conveyed. For one thing, the caddy was probably constructed to fit the "home wrapping center" and not the other way around, and although what is does not have to be the same as what is asserted, I can't think of a reason why one would want to assert it to be the wrapping paper, etc. that fits the caddy rather than vice versa. Certainly this is not a strong meaning element in the speech act.

When one compares 20a with 20b,c, the agent property the patient seems to have in 20a that it does not have in 20b,c is that of independence of action. In both 20b and 20c someone else does the storing -- the hypothetical addressee in 20b or an indefinite agent in

20c -- but in 20a there is no agent that does it; it seems to happen of its own accord. It is in this sense that the "home wrapping center" has independence of action. This is especially clear when one compares 20a and 20c, since neither has an expressed agent: in 20c the agent, though unexpressed, does the storing; in 20a it happens of its own accord.

We have already seen 21a as 16 above. In 21b,c are agent-subject counterparts:

- 21a. Let's see how this (idea) communicates on film.
- b. Let's see how we can communicate this (idea) on film.
- c. Let's see how this (idea) can be communicated on film.

In 21b,c, it is the agent (whether expressed or not) that is doing the communicating whereas in 21a the idea itself has its own power to communicate.

Another example is found in 22a. There is no sense that a property of the patient a verb is responsible for the action of the predicate, and yet the patient occurs in subject position in an active sentence:

- 22a. You think you understand the difference between the three voices in Greek and how to translate each one but then once in a while you come across a verb that won't translate right.
- b. ...but then once in a while you come across a verb that you can't translate right.

The speaker is not asserting that there is some property of the verb which makes it that you can't translate it right, but that the verb by itself is such that it can't be translated right -- that it, independently of any agent, brings about the action of the predicate. (The auxiliary won't helps to convey this idea as well.) Even in such a

case a patient-subject sentence can be used. This works the agent out of the picture (reducing, indeed, the agent's responsibility by not laying the blame at the agent's door). In fact, of course, the contribution of the agent is not irrelevant to the event, but this is the assertion. As mentioned before, what is important is not what is really the case but rather what the speaker wishes to assert about the speaker's perception of reality.

Another example[2]:

- 23a. These programs are enrolling fast, so please get in contact with Academic Travel soon!
- b. These programs are filling up fast.
- c. People are enrolling in these programs #fast/in rapid succession.
- d. We are enrolling people in these programs #fast/in rapid succession.

Although one could say it is a property of the programs -- that they are so good, say -- that results in their filling up fast, this is not the reason for saying the sentence, as the context makes clear:

- 24. As many of you know by now, Russia Winter VII goes off in three different directions. There is something here to please everyone: those searching for the exotic (Central Asia), or for adventure (Siberia), or for an economical, yet comprehensive, time in Russia (Russia Winter Primer).
These programs are enrolling fast, so please get in contact with Academic Travel soon! Russia Winter Primer -- which goes to Moscow, Leningrad, and Vladimir/Suzdal -- is filling especially fast.

The emphasis is not on how good the programs are. This passage is written not primarily in order to encourage people to enroll, but rather to encourage them to do it soon before there is no more room. The agent(s), those who are causing the programs to fill up -- or perhaps

the people who sign up the people who apply -- are not especially important; what is important is the result: that there will soon be no more room for others.

Note also that using fast in 23c,d would not mean the same thing as using it in 23a,b (this is the meaning of the cross-hatch). Again, the adverb fast modifies some action of the programs in 23a, b, whereas it modifies an action of the people applying to participate in 23c and to the people signing up the people applying to participate in 23d.

I cannot emphasize enough that what is important is not reality but what the speaker chooses to say about reality. In 23a it is very possible that the programs are filling up fast because they are so good, and it may also be the case that the writer is trying to encourage readers to join. But the writer goes about this in an indirect way: by saying the programs are filling up fast, and leaving the readers to draw the conclusion that maybe the programs are good and they should jump on the bandwagon too before it is too late.

In this subsection we have seen two reasons to use a patient-subject sentence. Both are based on the central attribute of patient-subject sentences: the irrelevance of any agent. The agent can be irrelevant for two reasons, however: either a property of the patient is responsible for the action of the predicate, or the patient has independence of action: it does not need an agent to bring the action of the predicate about.

4.1.2 Tests for Patient-Subject Sentences

In discussing the previous examples I have mentioned three tests which will determine whether there is a true agent, either "underlyingly" or understood, in the sentence. These three were:

- the willingly test
- adverbial modifiers pick out the patient subject
- when the agent is not irrelevant, a patient-subject sentence is impossible

In this subsection I will consider these three tests one by one.

4.1.2.1 The Willingly Test

In a patient-subject sentence, there is no agent: the patient has taken over properties of the agent. This is the difference between the passive construction, which also allows a patient to occur in subject position, and the patient-subject construction. The formal difference follows the functional difference of the nonexistence of any agent (rather than that the agent is merely not expressed): with passive the verb receives a marked morphology, whereas with the patient-subject construction there is no such indication. This is because the purpose of the patient-subject construction is precisely to enable the speaker to assert that the relation that the patient bears to the verb is the one that the agent, the normal subject of the verb, usually bears, that is, that the patient can bring about the action of the predicate

independently and even that properties of the patient bear the responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the verb. The marked morphology on the passive verb shows that this is not the case in passive sentences. In normal be-passive sentences, responsibility still lies with the agent, the underlying subject (but see also Chapter 5). In the patient-subject construction, the agent is no longer responsible to any extent.

The willingly test discussed in Lakoff 1970 supports this analysis. In a normal active agent-subject sentence as in 25, willingly picks out the agent subject: the natives are the ones that are willing to sacrifice Harry. When such a sentence is passivized, however, it may be the referent of either the passive or the active subject which is willing: in 26, either Harry or the natives. This is the case whether the underlying subject is overtly present or not; thus 27, in which the agent is left unexpressed, is still ambiguous.

- 25. The natives willingly sacrificed Harry.
- 26. Harry was willingly sacrificed by the natives.
- 27. Harry was willingly sacrificed.

In a patient-subject sentence the agent has no responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate, since the entire point of saying the sentence is to assert that properties of the patient fulfill this task. If the agent has no responsibility and consequently has no influence on the occurrence or non-occurrence of the predicate, it can no longer be willing for the action of the predicate to occur, and so willingly cannot refer to the agent[3]. Thus a sentence like 28,

28. *The floor cleans easily and willingly.

instead of being ambiguous, is unacceptable on any reading, since there is no underlying agent who has the responsibility to warrant his or her being willing to clean the floor, and since the actual subject, the floor, is inanimate and therefore doesn't have a will. It is not just that willingly can't occur with a patient-subject construction, as the acceptability of 29 shows[4]:

29. Harry seduces easily and willingly.

In the previous section, we saw that the same thing was true with the adverbs instantly in 12a, like meat in 12b, like silver in 12c, and fast in 23a.

4.1.2.2 Adverbial Modifiers Pick Out Agent

In fact, any adverbial modifier modifies the patient in a patient-subject sentence. When the sentence is in the normal active form or passive form, the adverbial can modify any major noun argument in the sentence, the agent, the patient, or an "understood" agent. Thus, when a patient-subject sentence is followed by reasons, the reasons have to do with the patient subject rather than with the agent:

30. The clothes will clean with no trouble because...
- a. ...they're machine-washable.
 - b. *...I have lots of time.

If the clothes is not made subject, as in 31, then either reason is

acceptable:

- 31. It will be no trouble to clean the clothes because...
 - a. ...they're machine-washable.
 - b. ...I have lots of time.
- 32. It will be no trouble to get the clothes cleaned because...
 - a. ...they're machine-washable.
 - b. ...I have lots of time to take them to the cleaner's.
 - c. ...The maid's not very busy right now.

Similarly, if we follow a sentence like 33 with reasons, the reason would be of the sort given in 34.

- 33. The trailer pulls easily.
- 34a. It is very streamlined.
- b. I just had its ball-bearings greased.

If the trailer is not the subject, as in 35, then the reasons given can have to do with whatever is then the subject, either the car pulling it, as in 36a, or the person activating the car, as in 36b -- or with the direct object, the patient this trailer, as in 36c,d:

- 35. I/The car can pull the trailer easily.
- 36a. It [i.e. the car] has a 200 HP engine.
- b. I have lots of experience at it.
- c. It is very streamlined.
- d. I just had its ball-bearings greased.

Thus when the patient is made the subject of the sentence it, or a property it bears, is understood to be responsible for the ease or the possibility of the action of the predicate. As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, responsibility and independence of action are typically properties of the agent. Thus in 37,

37. Clancy broke the glass.

Clancy is responsible for the breaking of the glass whether he intended it or not, and he (can have) acted without a force acting on him. The situation is similar with 33. If 33 is followed by reasons, the reasons will be of the sort which will make the trailer responsible for the action of the verb -- its shape or the working order of its parts. The patient-subject construction, then, is used when we want to say that the patient of the action is to some extent acting as agent.

4.1.2.3 When Agent is Not Irrelevant

There is a third piece of evidence to indicate that patients are allowed to become subject in patient-subject sentences when they have, according to the speaker, some agent properties, specifically responsibility and independence of action. This is that when an agentless reading is not possible, a patient-subject sentence is unacceptable. When an adverbial modifier or a tense is too specific, pointing to a specific occurrence, then a patient-subject sentence is not possible. Compare 38 with 12 (page 128) above:

- 38a. *The cereal prepared in my bowl while I was taking my bath.
- b. *Rover's kibble cut into this bowl while the soup was cooking. It never chewed, Rover gobbled it up so fast.
- c. *The silver earrings polished up yesterday; today it's the gold necklace's turn.
- d. *The tent puts up in my back yard.

And compare 39 with 20a (page 138), 21a (page 139) 22a (page 139) and

23a (page 140):

- 39a. *The home wrapping center stored in our attic for three years before I ever got around to throwing it away.
- b. *That idea communicated on the film Hunt made.
- c. *That passage translated more easily when I had my interlinear next to me.
- c. *The program enrolls faster when you make up a set of standard questions to ask each applicant beforehand.

4.1.3 The Tense of Patient-Subject Sentences

I have mentioned (page 132) that the simple present is a very common tense for patient-subject sentences to occur in. This is especially true of Responsibility patient-subject sentences -- those that imply that a property of the patient is responsible for the action of the predicate. When sentences of this type are put in another tense, they become unacceptable, as in 12a (page 128) and 17 (page 133):

- 12a. (A certain instant cereal)prepares in your bowl ...
instantly.

6. *My cereal prepared in my bowl while I rinsed off a spoon.

Even on the gnomie reading it is difficult to use another tense[5].

- 40a.??When I was little they made this cereal that prepared
instantly in your bowl.
b.??After the revolution all cereals will prepare instantly in
your bowl.

Responsibility-type patient-subject sentences can also occur in the simple future tense as in 30a (page 144 and repeated here):

- 30a. The clothes will clean with no trouble because they're
machine-washable.

Or they can occur in the conditional:

41. This tent would put up with no trouble except I forgot the tent pegs.

I have not found actually-attested examples of Responsibility patient-subject occurring in any other tense.

The situation with Independence-of-Action patient-subject sentences is somewhat freer. We have seen many of this type in the simple present, as in 42a,b (cf. pages 138 and 139 respectively):

- 42a. Enjoy gift wrapping the easy, organized way with a complete "home wrapping center" that stores in its own caddy.
b. Let's see how this idea communicates on film.

But independence-of-action patient-subject sentences also occur in the present progressive in 23a (page 140, repeated here as 43):

43. These programs are enrolling fast, so please get in contact with Academic Travel soon!

One can set up a gradation of time references on a scale:

contingent <-----> actual

At the contingent end of the scale are the future tense, the conditional and the gnomic simple present, as in 44a,b,c respectively:

- 44a. These clothes will wash with no trouble.
b. This tent would put up with no trouble except that I forgot the tent pegs.
c. A good tent puts up in about two minutes.

At the actual end of the scale are the punctual tenses used to report

events, like the perfect tenses as in 45a,b, or the simple past as in 45c or the present progressive used to report a contemporaneously-occurring event as in 45d:

- 45a. I have broken my arm.
- b. He had found the ring by the time I got there.
- c. He fixed the hot tub yesterday.
- d. He is fixing the hot tub.

Between these two, but closer to the actual end of the scale, are the verbs referring to habitual or continuous states of affairs, or temporary situations, or states or situations going on as background to another event, as in 46a,b,c,d, respectively:

- 46a. John eats leftovers for breakfast.
- b. Quiet! I'm thinking.
- c. I am living at 7 Mulberry Court.
- d. While John was washing the dishes, the mail came.

In 46d, the situation in the subordinate while-clause is background to the event of the mail coming.

On that contingent-to-actual scale, patient-subject sentences prefer the more contingent end. Responsibility Patient-Subject sentences prefer the contingent end of the scale even more than do Independence-of-Action Patient-Subject sentences. As we have seen, Responsibility Patient-Subject sentences restrict themselves to the gnomic simple present, the future and the conditional, whereas the Independence-of-Action Patient-Subject sentences can go further down the scale than Responsibility patient-subject sentences.

It seems that something about the semantic structure of the verb

also determines how far down the contingency scale one can go in the tense. While one can say both 47a and 47b,

- 47a. A good tent puts up in about two minutes.
- b. I can tell it's a tangelo from the way it peels.

one cannot say 48a but one can say 48b:

- 48a. *My tent put up in ten minutes.
- b. That tangelo peeled like an orange.

Two other verbs that can occur even in the simple past and the present perfect are photocopy and sell, in 49 and 50, respectively:

- 49 A: You didn't leave enough of a margin on the bottom of that page.
B: No, it just photocopied too low.
- 50. That title sold thousands of copies on its first day of publication.

At this time I have no idea what semantic aspect of verbs determines how far down the contingency scale they are allowed to go in patient-subject sentences.

4.1.4 Patient-Subjects and the Semantic Structure of Verbs

4.1.4.1 Eat, Chew, Digest

The possibility of this construction with some verbs and its impossibility with others is a useful gauge which helps us to make some inferences about the semantic structure of the verbs in question. A case in point is the trio eat, digest and chew. The word digest is

allowed in patient-subject sentences where eat is not, as in 51:

- 51a. This applesauce will digest rapidly.
- b. *This applesauce will eat rapidly.

It is not that eat is not allowed in patient-subject sentences. The following examples are attested:

- 52a. (advertising slogan:) ...the soup that eats like a stew.
- b. Your virginity, your old virginity, is like one of our French withered pears; it looks ill, it eats drily; marry 'tis a withered pear..." (All's Well That Ends Well I(i)176)

At the same time, chew seems to enjoy a wider use in patient-subject sentences than eat as well. (We already saw one occurrence of it in 12b above.) You can't say 53a but 53b is possible:

- 53a. *Bread eats more easily than shoe leather.
- b. Bread chews more easily than shoe leather.

You can also use chew in sentences like those in 54:

- 54a. ...the soup that chews like a stew.
- b. French withered pears chew drily.

These differences reflect the differences in meaning between these three verbs. Digesting has to do with what happens in the stomach and intestines, chewing with what happens with the teeth, and eating, it seems, has to do with no more than getting food into the mouth -- and, perhaps, judging from 52b, with what happens in the mouth besides chewing, since there is no other word for it. When what is relevant is motivation for getting something into one's mouth -- tastiness, for example -- eat can be used with a patient-subject:

55. Keep these pills away from the baby. They're powerful, but they eat like they were candy.

The same thing is true with its counterpart for liquids, drink:

56. This wine drinks like it was water.

As we have seen in 52a, repeated here, when the discussion is about the method of getting food into one's mouth one is also able to use eat:

- 52a. ...The soup that eats like a stew.

And the effect (in the mouth) of putting something in the mouth can be expressed in a patient-subject sentence using eat, as in 52b:

- 52b. A French withered pear ... eats drily.

4.1.4.2 Buy and Sell

Our understanding of the meaning of the verbs buy and sell is also improved when we see the differing behavior of those verbs with respect to the patient-subject construction. Sell allows the patient-subject construction much more readily than buy, as the sentences in 53 show:

- 53a. The book is selling like hotcakes.
b. *The book is buying like it was going out of style.

Since buy and sell are opposite sides of the same transaction, presumably whatever it is in the patient which enables it to be sold also enables it to be bought. Nevertheless sell seems to allow the

patient-subject construction much more readily than buy. In the following examples, all sorts of conceivable contexts allow the use of sell in the patient-subject construction and do not allow the use of buy:

- 54a. Blatherstone Press books are selling to/*buying by readers of all types: old and young, male and female, educated and uneducated, black and white, West-Coast and East-Coast...
- b. Blatherstone Press books are selling/*buying in all sorts of locations: grocery stores, book stores, train stations, smoke shops, university campuses...
- c. Blatherstone Press books are selling/*buying for all sorts of reasons: some think they are interesting, others think they are trendy, others still find them titillating, others find them beautiful...
- d. Blatherstone Press books are selling/*buying at a very reasonable price.
- e. The illuminated manuscript page sold/*bought for \$100,000.

When we talk about buying we act as if properties of the purchaser were responsible; when we talk about selling, on the other hand, we do not limit responsibility to the seller. When we want to assert that it is properties of the entity bought and sold that are responsible for the transaction, we theoretically have two possible verbs, buy and sell, from which to choose. In fact, however, the verb sell, with agent subject, allows the object sold to bear some responsibility for the transaction whereas the verb buy does not. Look at the question in 55 and possible answers to it in 56:

- 55. How did Alex manage to buy the Jaguar?
- 56a. He quit school, got a job, pooled all his resources, sold his books, moved into a cheaper apartment, got a roommate, pawned his guitar...

- b. Alex thinks it's a great bargain, which will pay for itself in no time.
- c. It's a great car, a real bargain.
- d. The salesman at the Jaguar place could sell anybody anything.

Direct answers to 55 are as in 56a. If properties of the car come up at all they only come up as secondary reasons, ones motivating his pooling all his resources, etc. So the (b) and (c) remarks in 56 are, as they stand, irrelevant as an answer to 55, unless the speaker means them as a preface to show why Alex was willing to go to the great lengths to be mentioned later, such as those in 56a. Besides, even in (b) properties of the car are not evoked but only what the buyer thinks of the car. And even so 56b cannot be considered a direct answer to the question in 55. An answer like 56c is impossible except with the same conditions as for 56b, with in addition the implication that the speaker is in agreement with Alex's opinion on the car. Considering properties of the seller in an answer to 55, as in 56d, seems to be totally irrelevant.

To reply to the question in 57, on the other hand, one can evoke properties of any participant in the transaction, as in 58, where 58a deals with properties of the seller, 58b with properties of the object sold, and 58c with properties of the buyer, and still have a direct answer:

- 57. How did Marie manage to sell the car?
- 58a. She's taken three Dale Carnegie courses and could sell anybody anything.
- b. It's a great car, a real bargain.
- c. The world is full of suckers.

The word buy, then, is marked in that using it restricts one to

considerations about the purchaser; the word sell does not have this restriction. So it is understandable that 53a and not 53b is the preferred patient-subject construction. Lakoff 1977 points out that when the word buy is used to refer to a commercial transaction, we can make inferences about the condition of the purchaser: his or her needs or desires, for example. Selling, however, can be influenced by the state of the seller, of the object of the transaction, or of the purchaser. The hypothetical dialogues in 55 to 58 would back up this point of view. It is possible to use buy with a patient in subject position, but as far as I have been able to invent, only with the reflexive construction illustrated in 59:

59. A: How come you have so many clothes?
B: Well, they just all bought themselves....I can't seem to help it.

But even though that construction is very closely related to the construction we are interested in here, it differs in interesting ways from the non-reflexive patient-subject construction of this section (see Lakoff 1977). But again, the point of saying something like B's remark in 59 is to shunt the responsibility for the buying off onto the clothes and away from the true agent. When we talk about the attribution of responsibility in the patient-subject construction we are not, of course, talking about what is true in the world; we are only talking about where the speaker asserts that the responsibility lies.

4.1.4.3 Wash and Bath

Since it is easy, for both clothes and babies, to think of properties which will make it easier or harder to wash them, it is surprising that 60b is unacceptable whereas 60a is not:

- 60a. These clothes will wash with no trouble.
b. *The baby will wash with no trouble.

There seem to be lots of properties a baby can have which will influence its being easy or hard to wash, for example, whether it is scared of being bathed, whether it squirms, etc. The difference between sentence 61 and 60b,

61. A baby washes more easily than an armadillo.

is that it is clear in 61 but not in 60b that it is the outer surface which is in question.

There is a verb, bath, which is used particularly with babies and children (in British and Canadian English). With this verb fear and squirminess and such internal characteristics are more important than the outside surface:

62. Johnny will bath with no trouble because...
a. ...he's a very placid baby.
b. ??...he's not very dirty.

With wash, 63b is more acceptable than 63a:

63. Johnny will wash with no trouble because...
a. ??...he's a very placid baby.

- b. ...he's not very dirty.

4.1.5 Related Constructions

Patient-subject sentences are one type of nonprototypical agent-action sentence. In this section I will briefly discuss three others, namely:

- what I call agentive instrument sentences
- sentences containing change-of-state verbs like open, crack, etc.
- reflexive patient-subject sentences

I will discuss these three classes in turn.

4.1.5.1 Agentive Instrument Sentences

An agentive instrument sentence is one in which a verb which prototypically has a human agent has an inanimate subject, much as a patient-subject sentence has, but there is no agent possible in the frame. The following examples all come out of a kitchen-supply catalogue:

- 64a. (This) pizza crisper gives you perfect crust...
- b. Set (of ceramic-tile trivets) displays four farm favorites: pig, rooster, cow and duck.
 - c. (Nesting glass bowls) perform so many jobs...
 - d. Under cabinet spice rack holds most standard size spice cans in easy reach.

Unlike patient-subject sentences, in the sentences in 64 the agent is not irrelevant; rather, insofar as there is an agent, the subject of the

sentence is the true agent. That is to say, the agent of verbs like give, display, perform and hold do not have to be human and as such can be less prototypical than the agent of a verb like put up in 12d (page 128), which must have a human subject. The relation between 64 and 65 is not the same as the relation between the patient-subject sentences in 12 and the corresponding agent-subject sentences in 13, for example:

- 65a. ?With this pizza crisper you can give yourself perfect crust...
- b. You can display four farm favorites using this set of ceramic-tile trivets.
- c. You can perform so many jobs using these nesting glass bowls.
- d. ?You can hold most standard size spice cans in easy reach using this under cabinet spice rack.

Although 65b,c are acceptable and 65a,d are not so very unacceptable, they do not mean the same thing as the corresponding sentences in 64. However, each of these verbs, give, display, perform and hold, prototypically occurs with a human agent. The class seems to slide into the patient-subject class where the "patient"-subject is actually an instrument, as in 14c (page 137, repeated here):

- 14c. It chops, it slices, it dices! Call now ... operators standing by.

In fact, both the agent and the instrument can be said to chop, slice and dice when the appliance is in use. The instruments in agentive-instrument sentences take this one step farther. The agentive-instrument sentences can occur in any tense, including the present perfect and the past tenses, among the most actual on the contingency scale:

- 66a. That pizza crisper gave us a perfect crust every time when we used it.
- b. You broke my set of ceramic tile trivets, that so charmingly displayed four favorite farm animals??
- c. Those nesting glass bowls you gave us for a wedding present have performed so many jobs for us!
- d. That under cabinet spice rack has held more than just spices in its time.

4.1.5.2 Change-of-State Verbs

In change-of-state verbs, discussed by Fillmore (1968), and exemplified in 67, agent, instrument and patient can be subject. Normally, the instrument is subject if there is no agent, and the patient is subject if there is neither instrument nor agent:

- 67a. Maxine opened the door with a master key.
- b. This key will open the door.
- c. The door opened.

Sentence 67c is not a patient-subject sentence, nor are any of the other sentences with change-of-state verbs and patient subjects patient-subject sentences in the sense I mean in this section. Some other examples are found in 68:

- 68a. The vase broke.
- b. The sidewalk cracked.
- c. The ice melted.

There are three reasons for distinguishing between these change-of-state sentences and patient-subject sentences. In the first place, as in the case of agentive instrument sentences, change-of-state sentences can occur in any tense, for example the simple past as in 67c and 68. In the

second place, they can occur freely without adverbials, again as in 67c and 68. In patient-subject sentences this is very rare; all the sentences in this section, for example, have adverbial modifiers. (It is possible, sometimes, to have a patient-subject sentence without an adverbial modifier; we will discuss this more in the next section. But it is much rarer than in the case of change-of-state verbs, where an adverbial is never necessary for the sentence to be acceptable.) In the third place, the patient-subject construction can interact with the regular form of change-of-state verbs to produce, in addition to the sentences in 67, for example, also the sentence in 69, patient-subject counterpart of 67b, repeated here:

67b. This key will open the door.

69. The door will open with this key.

Nevertheless, there are interesting differences between a patient-subject sentence like that in 69 and patient-subject sentences in general. First of all, note that you can mention the entity that, putatively, has relinquished its place to the patient-subject -- here the instrument -- in the sentence. Normally, that is not the case. Compare 69 with 70:

70. *This appliance chops, slices and dices by anybody intelligent enough to use it.

Further, we have seen that with a regular patient-subject sentence, any adverbial modifier must modify the patient subject and not another element in the frame, where overt in the sentence or understood. This was demonstrated with a patient-subject sentence like

that in 30 (page 144, repeated here), for example.

30. The clothes will clean with no trouble because...
- a. ...they're machine-washable.
 - b. *...I have lots of time.

A sentence like 69, unlike a sentence like 30, can be followed by a property of the key as well as a property of the door, as in 71:

71. The door will open with this key...
- a. it's a master key and can open anything.
 - b. provided it doesn't stick.

Compare 71 to 67b and 72:

- 67b. This key will open the door.
72. This key will open the door...
- a. it's a master key and can open anything.
 - b. provided it doesn't stick.

Though it may be true that given a choice people will interchange the patient and instrument in the sentences in 71 and 72, thus corroborating our previous point, the sentences as they stand are much more acceptable than a sentence like 30b, for example. I think this is due to the fact that both sentences like 67b and sentences like 67c, repeated here,

- 67c. The door opened.

are acceptable. Thus 71 participates both in the patient-subject construction and in the change-of-state-verb constructions; as the latter it allows a continuation like 71a.

4.1.5.3 Reflexive Patient-Subject Sentences

In 73 is found an example of a reflexive patient-subject sentence:

73. This paper practically wrote itself.

These sentences are also discussed in Lakoff 1977, where he suggests that

...the Reflexive-Patient-Subject construction ... has agent-focus properties, not patient-focus properties [as the regular patient-subject construction does]. ... [In sentences of the reflexive-patient-subject type] we are concentrating on the contribution ... made by the agent; the construction says that little effort was needed on the part of the agent because of the properties of the patient. In fact, it says more -- that the agent is not the principal energy source for the action denoted by the unmodified predicate. (Lakoff 1977:252)

A sentence like 74 would corroborate the suggestion that the reflexive patient-subject construction has agent-focus properties rather than patient-focus properties:

74 A: How come you have so many clothes?
B: Well, they just all seem to have bought themselves ... I can't seem to help it.

We have seen above in section 3.1.3.2 (page 153) that with sell, properties of the patient -- the object sold -- are considered to bear some responsibility for the transaction whereas with buy only properties of the agent -- the buyer -- are relevant. In 74 the question to ask is: What does it in the response refer to? It refers to something like "my buying clothes." In other words, properties of the agent are relevant.

As a result, the reflexive patient-subject construction and the

regular patient-subject construction are frequently in complementary distribution: the one can be used where the other cannot. Compare 75a,b with 76a,b and 77a,b with 78a,b:

- 75a. *This paper writes/wrote easily.
 - b. This paper practically wrote itself.
- 76a. This paper read well.
 - b. *This paper practically read itself.
- 77a. Those books are selling well.
 - b. ?Those books are practically selling themselves.
- 78a. *Those books are buying well.
 - b. Those books practically bought themselves.

4.1.6 Remaining Mysteries

There are many other things that are still mysterious about the patient-subject construction; I will mention a few of them. For example, when does it require an adverb and when does it not? I have mentioned that most patient-subject sentences require an adverb, and indeed all the examples in this section have occurred with an adverb. However, sell does not always need an adverb, as in 79a. Drink seems to require one, 79b. Although wash and clean frequently do need adverbs, as in 79c,d, in the proper context and with the proper intonation they may get along without one, as in 80a,b[7] (cf. also note 4):

- 79a. Yes but will it sell?
 - b. *The wine drinks.
 - c. *The clothes wash.
 - d. *The silver vase cleans.
- 80a. Does this dress wash or does it have to be dry-cleaned?
 - b. The floor just won't clean.
 - c. *This wine just won't drink.

A final unsolved problem I will mention is the variability in the ways in which different patient-subject sentences will permute. The sentences in 81 to 83 illustrate an incomplete paradigm:

- 81a. Does he discourage easily?
 - b. Does the applesauce digest rapidly?
 - c. Does the car steer easily?
- 82a. *How easily does he discourage?
 - b. *I was amazed at how easily he fooled.
- 83a. How easily does the car steer?
 - b. I was amazed at how rapidly the applesauce digested.

All the mysteries about the constraints on this construction are therefore far from solved. Nevertheless, when the construction is allowed, it is because the patient subject is to some degree acting as agent: either it has independence of action, or it has independence of action and a property it has is responsible for the action of the predicate.

4.1.7 Conclusions

The existence of the patient-subject construction has several important consequences for linguistic theory, both in the area of the nature of agents and in the area of the nature of topics.

4.1.7.1 Subjects and Agentivity

The choice of subject seems to be controlled by a process of partial pattern matching, as discussed in Lakoff 1977: it depends on what argument of the verb most nearly approximates the prototype for subjects. Independence of action and responsibility, the primary attributes triggering the patient-subject construction, would then appear to be a central feature of subjects, and of agents as well, more important than attributes like intention or voluntariness. The construction also shows that one noun can have both agent properties and patient properties in the same sentence at the same time in English, leading perhaps to the conclusion that the categories of agent and patient are not as discrete as has been supposed. The patient-subject construction only superficially contradicts Keenan's (1976b) universal semantic characterization of subject (i.e. that they are typically agents): the whole point of saying sentences like those in 12 is to assert that the patient is, to some extent, acting like agent.

4.1.7.2 Subjects and Topichood

In this section I have been primarily interested in tracing what the patient-subject construction has to say about subjecthood and agentivity. However, it has something to say about the relation between subjects and topichood as well. The patient-subject construction allows the maintenance of topic in subject position. Compare 12a and 13a (page 128, repeated here), where presumably the sentence topic is the instant cereal:

- 12a. (Instant cereal advertisement:) Prepares in your bowl...instantly.
- 13a. You can prepare this instant cereal in your bowl, and it will be ready instantly.

In the patient-subject version 12a, the sentence topic and the subject coincide, but in the agent-subject version 13a they do not. Further, the patient-subject construction sometimes allows the topic to be maintained in subject position. Compare 12c and 13c, repeated here:

- 12c. I think that's silver...it polishes up like silver.
- 13c. I think that's silver. When you polish it, it behaves like silver and the result is like silver.

In 12c but not in 13c, the subject continues to refer to the sentence topic, without an intervening non-sentence-topic subject. Because human beings are most likely to want to talk about the thing most like themselves, namely the most agentive thing, the fact that agentive patients take up subject position is additional corroboration that prototypically, topics are found in subject position.

4.2 The Tough-Construction

The Tough-Construction is exemplified in 1[8]:

- 84a. This cake was a breeze to bake.
- b. Everett is bad to have as an example.
- c. My cat is pleasant to have on my lap while I'm studying.

In Tough-Construction sentences, what is semantically an object of a lower clause, whether a direct, indirect or prepositional object, is syntactically the subject of the main clause. I designate this phenomenon the "Tough-Construction." This construction is used when a property of the referent of the subject bears primary responsibility for the occurrence of the predicate. The meaning of the subject in this construction deviates from the meaning of the subject in basic sentences, since the subject is not the primary of the main verb. For example, the subject of each of the three sentences in 84 is not the primary of the main verb in the sentence (be) a breeze, (be) bad, and (be) pleasant, respectively: the primary in each case is the sentential complement (a nonprototypical primary). The construction thus also serves to put a more prototypical type of NP into subject position: one that refers to a basic-level object.

As far as the relations between the verb and its arguments are concerned, there is very little difference between the sentences in 84 and the corresponding sentences in 85:

- 85a. It was a breeze to bake this cake.
- b. It is bad to have Everett as an example.
- c. It is pleasant to have my cat on my lap while I'm studying.

Why, then, do we sometimes feel it necessary to promote this object to subject position in the higher clause? It is not that the object is asserted to have the property expressed by the adjective; when one asserts 86a one does not also assert 86b, and 87 is not contradictory.

- 86a. John is tough to please.
- b. John is tough.

- 87. My cat has a foul temper, but she's pleasant to have on my lap when I'm studying.

In order to answer the question what we mean to convey when we make the lower object the subject of the higher adjective, it will be instructive to see some of the syntactic characteristics of the construction.

Berman 1974 points out several facts which will be of interest to us here. In the first place, adjectives which occur in the Tough-Construction also allow a for-prepositional phrase, as in 88:

- 88a. John is tough for his wife to please.
- b. This cake would be a breeze for a five-year-old to make.
- c. My cat is very pleasant for me to have on my lap.

Berman demonstrates that this for-phrase belongs in the higher clause and is not the subject of the lower clause by showing, among other things, that in other constructions that this sentence can participate in, where the adjective and infinitival complement do not both flank the for-phrase, the for-phrase goes with the adjective and not with the infinitival complement. Thus you have 89a but not 89b; in 89c since a for-phrase can in principle go either with a predicate like easy or with

an infinitive phrase, it is acceptable on the reading equivalent to 89a.

- 89a. Baking this cake would be easy for a five-year-old.
- b. *For a five-year-old to bake this cake would be easy.
- c. It would be easy for a five-year-old to bake this cake.

This behavior of the Tough-Construction adjectives contrasts with the behavior of other adjectives which do not occur in the Tough-Construction, for example ridiculous. When there is a for-phrase in a sentence like 90, the phrase is the subject of the lower clause, as is demonstrated by the forms of the sentence in 91; and the sentence cannot occur in the Tough-Construction, as is shown in 92.

- 90. It is ridiculous for Mark to play the organ in church.
- 91a. For Mark to play the organ in church is ridiculous.
- b. *Playing the organ in church is ridiculous for Mark.
- 92. *The organ is ridiculous for Mark to play in church.

Another syntactic fact about the Tough-Construction is that it contains an essential variable. That is, the noun phrase which is the subject in the Tough-Construction can be the logical object of a verb embedded indefinitely-far below the tough-predicate of which it is the syntactic subject, as a sentence like 93 shows.

- 93. John is tough for me to convince Mary to try to make an extra effort to please.

This is in contrast with another set of sentences which looks very much like the set of sentences in the Tough-Construction, and which are exemplified in 94:

- 94a. The cake is delicious to eat.
- b. Mr. Simms-Gaythorpe is charming to talk to.

- c. Sylvia's song was soothing to listen to.

These sentences do not allow the subject to bear a logical relation to a verb embedded indefinitely-far below the tough-predicate, as is shown in 95a, and they do not allow a for-phrase, as is shown in 95b. On the other hand, in such sentences the subject is asserted to have the property expressed in the adjective, and, as in 95c, one can omit the infinitival complement altogether without as great damage to the semantics as there is in the case of true Tough-Construction sentences like those in 84 (page 167).

- 95a. *The cake is delicious to induce our guests to eat.
 b. *The cake is delicious for Nana to eat.
 c. The cake is delicious. [9]

Furthermore, such sentences cannot undergo the same permutations that normal Tough-Construction sentences can, as 95d and 95e show:

- 95d. *It is delicious to eat the cake.
 e. *Eating the cake is delicious.

A third syntactic characteristic of the Tough-Construction which Berman mentions is that the noun which is the subject of the tough-predicate may not participate in the constructions which have been called about-Movement, Dative-Movement, Raising or Passive, as shown in 96, 97, 98 and 99, respectively (the dots show where the subject belongs in the lower sentence):

- 96a. *Mr. Paxton is impossible to talk about the crime to ..
 cf. b. Mr. Paxton is impossible to talk to .. about the crime.
 c. *The crime is impossible to talk about .. to Mr. Paxton.
 cf. d. The crime is impossible to talk to Mr. Paxton about ..[10]

- 97a. *Esmeralda is impossible to give .. directions.

- cf. b. Esmeralda is impossible to give directions to.
 - c. *Directions are impossible to give Esmeralda ..
 - cf. d. Directions are impossible to give .. to Esmeralda.
98. *Webster is impossible to believe .. to have committed the crime.
- 99a. *Helen is unpleasant to be visited by.
- cf. b. Helen is unpleasant to visit.

These three syntactic characteristics -- the possibility of a for-phrase in the higher clause registering the participant affected, the possibility that the subject of the tough-predicate belongs logically indefinitely far below the tough-predicate, and the impossibility of the subject's participation in another construction in which the subject finds itself in another position than it has in the basic construction -- are syntactic characteristics of the construction as a whole, which will turn out to be relevant at various points in this discussion. Now I would like to turn to the semantic characteristics of tough-predicates as a class, in order to begin to answer the question why we want to make the lower object the subject of the main clause. Halpern 1977 has pointed out that there seem to be three different kinds of adjectives occurring as tough-predicates: Success-oriented predicates, such as in 84a, value-oriented predicates, as in 84b, and psychologically-oriented predicates, as in 84c, repeated here for convenience:

- 84a. This cake was a breeze to bake.
- b. Everett is bad to have as an example.
- c. My cat is pleasant to have on my lap while I'm studying.

What do all these predicates have in common that they should all be possible in the Tough-Construction? What they all have in common is that

they all are, so to speak, speaker-oriented predicates: they relate to the speaker's success, to the speaker's judgments of value, or to the speaker's emotional state. Sentences like those in 94, on the other hand, contain subject-oriented predicates -- predicates that pick out a property of the subject. This also accounts for why Tough-Construction sentences do need that infinitival complement, and why sentences like those in 100 are bad (at least with the same sense as in 84):

- 100a. *This cake was a breeze [11].
 b. %Everett is bad.
 c. %My cat is pleasant. (but cf. fn. 2)

The fact is that the infinitival complement is needed to show in what way the subject induces the speaker-oriented judgement expressed in the adjective.

The terms speaker-oriented and subject-oriented are intentionally identical with Jackendoff's (1972) terminology for adverbs, because I think that adjectives can work the same way as adverbs in this respect, semantically speaking: either they pick out a property of the speaker or they pick out a property of the subject, or the noun they modify. This is especially true of predicate adjectives, but can also be seen in attributive adjectives. Thus in an easy mark the adjective is speaker-oriented whereas in Parliamentary decision the adjective picks out a property of the noun. An adjective can be speaker-oriented in one noun phrase and subject-oriented in another: an easy mark is speaker-oriented whereas an easy reply (in the sense related to that of He replied easily) is subject-oriented. We have already seen this in predicate adjectives: pleasant in 84c is speaker-oriented but in 100c it

can only be interpreted as subject-oriented.

The term "speaker-oriented" is perhaps not very accurate, since if there is a for-phrase then an adjective of the type in question is considered as referring to the object of the for-phrase, and if the Tough-Construction is embedded in a clause with a non-factive predicate, the adjective is considered as referring to the subject of the higher clause. Thus one is justified in suspecting the speaker of 101a of crooked dealings but not the speaker of 101b; and in 101c the predicate refers to Willard:

- 101a. Children are easy to defraud.
- b. Children are easy for anyone with a criminal turn of mind to defraud.
- c. Willard thinks that children are easy to defraud.

Exactly the same situation holds for speaker-oriented adverbs, however. In 102a the adverb unfortunately is oriented towards the speaker, but in 102b it is oriented towards the object of the for-phrase. And in 102c as in 101c, the speaker-oriented adverb and adjective are oriented towards the subject of the higher clause.

- 102a. The police have unfortunately caught up with us.
- b. Unfortunately for you, your game is up.
- c. Clarissa said that the police had unfortunately caught up with them.

Thus with speaker-oriented adjectives as well as adverbs, the word in question is speaker-oriented only in the default case, where there is neither a higher subject nor a for-phrase.

We can now also see why the pseudo-Tough-Construction sentences

in 94 (page 169) do not allow a for-phrase in the higher clause, as we saw in 95b: since the adjective in the higher clause of 95b is not speaker-oriented but subject-oriented, the property it expresses does not vary with the individuals experiencing the cake. Of course, there may be differences of opinion as to whether the cake really is delicious, but nothing in the cake itself varies with the individual experiencers. The differences of opinion are expressed in English using a to-phrase or an according to-phrase and not a for-phrase[12], as for example in 103:

103. According to Nana, this cake is delicious to eat.

But what is it about speaker-oriented predicates of the type that occur in the Tough-Construction that allows the lower object to become the higher subject? In a sentence like 85c (page 167), the adjective pleasant gives the speaker's judgement (psychological, in this case) of the event or situation in the infinitival complement. When one uses the Tough-Construction equivalent of this sentence, as in 84c, one is in addition picking out the element in the event or situation which contains the property which is responsible for this judgement by the speaker, the cat in this case. It is quite easy to see what kinds of properties a cat would have which would induce the speaker's judgement of pleasantness. On the other hand, it is hard to see what properties of one's lap would induce the judgement of pleasantness. So it is not surprising that 104 should sound funny.

104. My lap is pleasant to have my cat on while I'm studying.

Insofar as one can find a property of laps that would induce the judgement of pleasantness, a hearer can interpret the sentence in a meaningful way. It is considerations like these that account for the difference in meaning between the famous (b) and (c) sentences of 105:

- 105a. It is easy to play sonatas on this violin.
- b. This violin is easy to play sonatas on.
- c. Sonatas are easy to play on this violin.

In 105b there is something about the violin which makes it easy to play sonatas on it, and in 105c the speaker asserts that there is something about sonatas, some property, which makes them easy to play on this particular violin. It is not just that in 105b the violin is the topic of conversation or the thing in focus and that in 105c the sonatas are. Suppose that the violin in question is not a very high-quality one and that one can only play relatively slow pieces on it with any degree of success, and suppose further than sonatas are usually slow pieces. Then properties of both the violin and the sonatas would have some responsibility for the real-world truth of 105a, and one could say any one of 105a,b,c to describe this state of affairs. But if one said 105b then one would be attributing the responsibility to the violin: what would be important would be that the violin is good enough for the purpose of playing sonatas; and if one said 105c one would be attributing responsibility to the sonatas: they are slow enough to play on this violin. The other element in each case would be like a constant with which the subject of the sentence stands in some sort of relation, a relation which is more or less efficacious depending on the properties of the subject. This can be seen more clearly when 105b and 105c are

embedded, as in 106 and 107. Sentence 106 can be followed by properties of the sonatas, but not by properties of the violin, whereas the opposite is true in 107:

106. Harry made sure his sonata would be easy to play on my violin...
a. ...by keeping it slow.
b. *...by tuning it.
107. Harry made sure my violin would be easy to play his sonata on...
a. *...by keeping it slow.
b. ...by tuning it.

This state of affairs is even more evident in 108 and 109, but this is partially due to the fact that sonata and violin, respectively, must also conform to the prototype for direct objects, which are typically the entities affected by the verb.

108. Harry made his sonata easy to play on my violin...
a. ...by keeping it slow.
b. *...by tuning it.
109. Harry made my violin easy to play his sonata on...
a. *...by keeping it slow.
b. ...by tuning it.

Another example is found in 110.

110. Joe is impossible to talk to because...
a. ...he's as stubborn as a mule.
b. *...he's out of town.
c. ...he's always out of town.

Compare 110 with 111, where the sentence is not in the Tough-Construction:

111. It's impossible to talk to Joe because...
a. ...he's as stubborn as a mule.

- b. ...he's out of town.
- c. ...he's always out of town.

When Joe is not made the subject of the sentence, as in 111, then any of the three reasons adduced in the 111a,b,c is an acceptable reason for the speaker judgement expressed in the main clause. When, however, Joe is made the subject, then only reasons relating to properties of Joe are acceptable as reasons for the situation in the main clause, as 110 shows. The fact that Joe is out of town is not a property of him, although it can perhaps be loosely said to be one; but it is not an inherent or permanent one. Noriko Akatsuka pointed out the possibility of 110c to me (personal communication); if Joe is always out of town then his out-of-town-ness becomes an attribute characterizing him, and furthermore one which causes or is responsible for the condition of the main clause, and so the Tough-Construction is appropriate.

So in sentences with the Tough-Construction we have three elements: the subject, the speaker-oriented predicate, and the situation, expressed in the infinitival complement, minus the noun which has been picked as responsible for the predicate. It is clear that the situation that the speaker may have a judgement about (expressed in the predicate) can be of indefinite complexity and therefore it is not surprising that the infinitival complement may have any number of embeddings. It also seems clear that the noun which refers to the entity which the speaker may see as responsible for his or her reaction to the situation may occur at any level of that complexity; therefore the subject of the Tough-Construction may have its coreferent at any level of embedding, as we saw it could in 93 (page 169). It is true that

the noun cannot be pulled out of a full clause: 112 is ungrammatical (cf. 98, page 171):

112. *Webster is impossible to believe that .. committed the crime.

It seems that what is disallowing this sentence, however, is a Ross constraint, which has been examined from a functional point of view by Kuno (1975, 1976)[13].

If it is understandable why the Tough-Construction can contain an essential variable, it remains mysterious why the construction exemplified in 94 (page 169) does not have an essential variable, as we saw in 95a, since it is not clear why the situation with respect to which the assertion of the main clause is true should not contain the subject of the main clause at any level of embedding. On the other hand, 113 is almost good:

113. The floor is slippery to try to dance on.

This is altogether a mysterious construction, and the constraints on it are numerous. For example, one can't say 114a though 114b is all right, and similarly for 115:

- 114a. *This banana is green to look at.
b. This banana is green.
- 115a. *These shoes are tight to wear.
b. These shoes are tight.

And compare the sentences in 116 to the (a) parts of 114 and 115:

- 116a. Mary is pretty to look at.
b. These clothes are sexy to wear.

It is true that the adjectives in 116 and those in 14 are more speaker-oriented than an adjective like green, but on the other hand, tight in 115 seems again quite speaker-oriented. In the solution to this problem, I think that it will probably be significant that for-phrases are disallowed in this construction, as we saw in 95b:

95b. *The cake is delicious for Nana to eat.

We saw in the sentences in 1 (page 123) that in the most prototypical of active sentences, the subject is a volitional agent through whose intentional agency the action of the predicate comes about, and who is responsible for the result. Which of these three properties of subject -- volition, intention, or responsibility -- is the most central in English? In other words, which one is most stringently required? Although I don't think we can have a definitive answer at this time, nevertheless, I think that there are some clues that responsibility of a property of the subject for the occurrence of the action of the predicate is the central characteristic of English subjects. In the first place, we saw in 4 that intention was not a necessary attribute of subjects and in 5 we saw that volition did not need to be present either in the subject in a large class of sentences, namely the ones with experiencer subjects. This is also true in sentences of the Tough-Construction type, as we have seen: neither intention nor volition need be present. It is, in fact, the notion of responsibility which makes the Tough-Construction possible at all, where it is possible. In the third place, the facts about the Patient-Subject Construction that we investigated in Section 4.1 indicate that

independence of action and primary responsibility are properties that patients and oblique cases can sometimes take over, in which case they also take up subject position: the only justification the subject of a sentence of this type has for being the subject is the fact that a property it has bears the responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate; the subject has neither necessarily the volition nor the intention that the action of the predicate occur. The same property of responsibility seems to be operative in the sentences given by Postal 1974:357 concerning the strike-construction. Postal gives examples like those in 116 and 117:

- 116a. It just now struck me that my wife has been dead two years tomorrow.
- b. *My wife has just now struck me as having been dead two years tomorrow.
- 117a. *Julius Caesar struck me as honest.
- b. It struck me that Julius Caesar was honest.

Postal says that the reason you can't say 117a is that "to do so implies (i) that I have, in fact, had some kind of perceptual experience of Julius Caesar, and (ii) that the judgment expressed is a function of this experience." The reason we need that perceptual experience of Julius Caesar in order to be able to say 117a, I would suggest, is because Julius Caesar, as subject of the sentence, needs himself to have a property which is responsible for the predicate; and the only way for that to happen in this context is for the speaker to be able to have had, as Postal says, "some kind of perceptual experience" of him.

These two constructions, then, as well as the other two discussed in this chapter, show that a crucial prerequisite for subjecthood is

that a property of the referent of the noun bears the responsibility for the occurrence of the predicate. This seems then to be a central characteristic of subjects, and, derivatively, of agents, since it is present under many different permutations of subjects. Although I have not investigated in detail whether similar functional constraints are operative for other relations, it seems to me highly plausible that they would be. Witness the several relation-changing constructions mentioning other syntactic relations, like Raising and Dative-Movement: this is assuming that each of those is not arbitrary but has a reason for its presence in a grammar of English. Then it is also understandable why, as we saw in 95 to 99, one cannot make a noun whose relation to its verb is already nonprototypical the subject of a Tough-Construction sentence. To use it in a Tough-Construction would simply nullify whatever functional effect the other movement rule would have had.

We have seen in the section that the Tough-Construction is used when a property of the referent of the subject bears primary responsibility for the occurrence of the predicate. The meaning of the subject in this construction deviates from the meaning of the subject in basic sentences, since the subject is not the primary of the main verb. The construction thus also serves to put a more prototypical type of NP into subject position: one that refers to a basic-level object. The findings of this section have several consequences for linguistic theory. In the first place it seems that the notions "speaker-oriented" and "subject-oriented" can be applied fruitfully not only to adverbs but also to adjectives and other predicates. In the second place, and most importantly here, we see that what seems to be the most important

attribute of agents as subjects is the responsibility that one of its properties has for the occurrence of the action of the predicate.

4.3 Psychological-Property-Factoring

In this section I will discuss a second type of property-factoring sentence (see also Section 3.3), that exemplified in 118a as opposed to 118b[14]:

- 118a. The kitten amused me with her antics.
- b. The kitten's antics amused me.

As mentioned in Section 3.3.1, I will call this type of property-factoring Psychological-Property-Factoring, or PsychPF for short. I will argue that a sentence is preferred such that the subject either has the agent properties of intentionality, volition and control, and thus also the agent property of responsibility for the occurrence of the predicate, or, failing that, has at least the agent property of responsibility. Compare the choice of answers in dialogues 119 and 120:

- 119 A: How did your three-year-old keep amused while he was recovering?
 - B a: *The kitten amused him with her antics.
 - b: The kitten's antics amused him.
 - c: The kitten amused him.
- 120 A: How did your three-year-old keep amused while he was recovering?
 - B a: My mother amused him with her stories.
 - b: My mother's stories amused him.
 - c: My mother amused him.

What amused the three-year-old was the kitten's antics in 119a,b

and the mother's stories in 120a,b. What it is about the kitten and the mother that amused the child in 119c and 120c, respectively, is not said. But in 119a,b and 120a,b, the kitten's antics and the mother's stories are responsible for the occurrence of the predicate. In addition, presumably the mother intended for the child to be amused by her stories, desired the child to be amused, and had control over the occurrence of the action of the predicate, whereas the kitten had no intention to amuse the child and no volition or control over the child's being amused. The mother, under this interpretation, has primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate, whereas the kitten, not having the intention to amuse the child, also does not have primary responsibility for the child's being amused by her antics, given that there is another entity that can have primary responsibility, namely the kitten's antics. Because the kitten did not have the intention of amusing the child (in the more normal scenario) the kitten cannot become subject in a property-factoring sentence. Because, in the most normal interpretation, the mother did have the intention of amusing the child, she can become the subject in a PsychPF sentence in this context. However, the mother's stories also can become the subject, as in 120b, if the speaker prefers not to assert that the mother had the intention or the desire to amuse the child, or that the mother had no control over the occurrence of the action of the predicate. This might be the case if the mother in fact did not intend to amuse the child, if for example the stories had been intended instead to edify the child, or if the speaker simply wants to downplay the mother's contribution in the event. The reader can ascertain personally

that the mother sounds much less agentive in 120b than in 120a, and that the problem with 119a is exactly that using it would make it sound as if the kitten had intended to amuse the child by her actions. When it is not a PsychPF sentence, the kitten and the mother can become subject, as in 119c and 120c, and such a sentence is vague on the question whether the kitten and the mother acted agentively or not. It is not necessary to wish to assert, for example, that the kitten intended to amuse the child, desired the child to be amused, and had control over the child's being amused, in order to be able to say 119c.

There is a wrinkle when you include considerations of topic-hood. It seems that when a focus of attention has to be established in the sentence in question, that is, when it differs from the one used or established in the previous sentence, establishing this focus of attention in a prominent place in the sentence -- at least a major constituent -- is of higher priority than putting the most agentive element in subject position. This is not a problem in 119 and 120 because in each case the child is the focus of attention. But compare 121 and 122:

- 121 A: What can you think of to amuse our three-year-old while he is recovering from pneumonia?
B: Well, he'll probably like these blocks, and here's a few books, and ... I know! Take my kitten!
a.??She will amuse him with her antics.
b. Her antics will amuse him.
- 122 A: What can you think of to amuse our three-year-old while he is recovering from pneumonia?
B: Well, he'll probably like these blocks, and here's a few books, and...I know!
a. The kitten can amuse him with her antics.
b. *The kitten's antics can amuse him.

Assuming always that the speaker wishes to convey the normal scenario where the cat has no intention of amusing anyone but may succeed in doing so all the same, when the kitten is mentioned beforehand as in 121, so that the focus of attention of the continuation is already established, 121b is better than 121a because the latter makes the kitten sound too agentive. But if the kitten has not yet been established, as in 122, then the property-factored form sounds best and does not sound too agentive.

Other examples of this type of property-factoring are found in the (a) examples of 123 to 125; they are to be compared to their (b) counterparts:

- 123a. The man exasperated his neighbors with his singing.
b. The man's singing exasperated his neighbors.
- 124a. The girl startled her mother with her sudden appearance.
b. The girl's sudden appearance startled her mother.
- 125a. My colleague intimidated me with her attitude.
b. My colleague's attitude intimidated me.

The (b) sentence of each pair has a possessive NP in subject position, and the head noun of the NP expresses an action, an activity or a state. In the (a) sentence, the possessor of the (b) sentence is the subject and the head noun of the (b) sentence is at the end of the sentence in a with-phrase in the (a) sentence. I will call the (b) sentence of each pair a non-PsychPF sentence.

The rest of this section is divided into four parts. In the first part I will discuss the semantic characteristics of this construction, in the second part I will return to the functions of this

construction and its role in discourse, in the third part I will return briefly to the OtherPF construction (see Section 3.3 above, pages 116f.), and in the fourth part I will talk about the significance of this construction for our understanding of subjects, agents and topics.

4.3.1 Semantic Properties of Psychological-Property-Factoring Sentences

We saw in Section 3.3.1 that PsychPF sentences had the following characteristics when compared to ChangePF sentences:

- The subject tends to be potentially agentive, that is, it is most often a human or other sentient being, sometimes an inanimate object
- the verb is a psychological verb like exasperate, amuse, annoy, charm, infuriate
- there is a with-prepositional phrase which contains a possessive resumptive pronoun coreferential with the subject[15]
- the head of the NP in the with-prepositional phrase is most often an activity or action, but can also be an attribute or, most unusually, an entity which stands in a part-whole relation with the subject

An activity[16], in the sense in which I am using the term, prototypically has the following properties:

1. An activity causes a change in the external world that is a direct result of the activity and that is perceivable by one of the major senses of sight, hearing or feeling (but especially sight). For example, the direct result of John's walking is his displacement from one point to another, which one can see.
2. An activity is something that is intentional. Thus seeing is not an activity in my sense; looking is.
3. The primary causer of an activity typically is an agent, with properties of intentionality, control and responsibility. The primary causer is the primary energy source for the activity.

The activity/attribute distinction interacts with the

requirement that PsychPF subjects be potentially agentive to some degree. If the factored noun is an attribute, the PsychPF subject must be potentially more agentive than if the factored noun is an activity. PsychPF sentences 126-128b illustrate this. With an attribute appearance as the factored noun, dog can occur only marginally as the raised noun, and mountain is not acceptable at all:

- 126a. The man's appearance intimidated me.
- b. The man intimidated me with his appearance.

- 127a. The dog's appearance intimidated me.
- b. ?The dog intimidated me with his appearance.

- 128a. The mountain's appearance intimidated me.
- b. *The mountain intimidated me with its appearance.

When the factored noun is an activity, however, the PsychPF sentences can have dog as the subject, as in 129b:

- 129a. The dog's growling intimidated me.
- b. The dog intimidated me with his growling.

Of course, potential agents are more likely to engage in activities than non-potential agents, specifically inanimate objects. In general, activities and agents go together and so it is not surprising that if PsychPF sentences show a preference for activities in the factored noun they also show a preference for potential agents in subject position. We may surmise that subjects in PsychPF sentences must show a certain level of agentivity in order to be acceptable, and that this can be done either by the appearance of an activity in the prepositional phrase or by the appearance of a potentially agentive noun in subject position (or both).

Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this. Consider the case of activity-like verbs such as creak, rustle, gleam, sputter and weather verbs like rain, snow, blow. They more typically occur with non-potential agents and have only the first of the three properties of activities discussed above. They do, however, bear a "family resemblance" (cf. Wittgenstein 1958:32{e}; Rosch and Mervis 1975) to prototypical activities in that they do have the first property of activities mentioned above and the other two under anthropomorphism. It is therefore doubly interesting that they can occur in PsychPF sentences, as in 130: the factored gerund does not designate a prototypical activity, and the raised subject is not a potentially agentive noun.

- 130a. The chair's creaking annoyed me.
- b. The chair annoyed me with its creaking.

Similarly, there are sentences like the following, from Fillmore 1968:23, in which a non-potential agent combines with an attribute:

- 131a. The brevity of your speech impressed us.
- b. Your speech impressed us with its brevity.

By combining the nature of the factored noun and the potential agentivity of the subject, a continuum of (actualized) agentivity emerges in subjects of PsychPF sentences, with on it the points mentioned in 132:

- 132a. The (human) V'd NP with (activity)
- b. The (animal) V'd NP with (activity)
- c. The (human) V'd NP with (attribute)
- d. The (animal) V'd NP with (attribute)
- e. The (inanimate object) V'd NP with (non-prototypical activity)
- f. The (inanimate object) V'd NP with (attribute)

The ordering of the points on the continuum seems to be as given from an intuitive point of view, and I will not justify it here, except for the ordering of 132b and 132c. That the ordering of these two points is correct as given can be seen in the following example, in which exasperate can occur in a PsychPF sentence of type 132b but not in one of type 132c:

- 133a. The cat exasperated us with her meowing.
- b. *The man exasperated us with his obtuseness.

If we are correct in our conclusion that PsychPF sentences are more favorable to agentivity than non-agentivity, then the examples in 133 would lead us to conclude that the subject in a sentence of type 132b is more agentive than the subject in a sentence of type 132c. Every psychological verb seems to have a different cutting-off point on the continuum of agentivity after which PsychPF may no longer be applied (Van Oosten 1978a). Thus although you can say both 134a and 134b, using infuriate, 135a is acceptable whereas 135b is not; these sentences are identical to the ones in 134 except that anger is used instead of infuriate:

- 134a. The man infuriated me with his singing.
- b. The cat infuriated me with her obtuseness.
- 135a. The man angered me with his singing.

- b. *The cat angered me with her obtuseness.

The position of these cutting-off points does not have anything obvious to do with the meaning of the verbs, since verbs semantically as close as anger and infuriate have quite different cutting-off points. A verb like annoy is allowed with (some) PsychPF sentences of type 132e and anything higher on the continuum; it is not allowed with PsychPF sentences of type 132f:

- 136a. The weight of the rock annoyed me.
b. *The rock annoyed me with its weight.

A verb like impress is allowed with PsychPF sentences even of type 132f, as was shown in 131. The verb exasperate, on the other hand, is not:

- 137a. The brevity of your speech exasperated me.
b. *Your speech exasperated me with its brevity.

And in general, PsychPF can be used only with subjects higher up on the agentivity scale; that is, if PsychPF can be used with a subject at a certain point on the agentivity scale, then it can be used with subjects at any higher point on the agentivity scale. This finding corroborates the notion that the use of a PsychPF sentence is connected with agentivity, but also points out that the connection with agentivity is not a black-and-white matter but a scalar one.

4.3.2 The Function of Psychological-Property-Factoring Sentences

We have seen in 119 and 120 above (page 182), repeated here,

119 A: How did your three-year-old keep amused while he was recovering?

B a: *The kitten amused him with her antics.

b: The kitten's antics amused him.

c: The kitten amused him.

120 A: How did your three-year-old keep amused while he was recovering?

B a: My mother amused him with her stories.

b: My mother's stories amused him.

c: My mother amused him.

that the entity that is asserted to have primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate becomes the subject. In the kitten scenario, it is doubtful that the kitten intended for the child's amusement to come about, and so she is not responsible for the child's amusement; her antics bear the primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate. If the speaker wants to assert that the kitten did intend for the child to be amused, then speaker can use 119a, but this eventuality is so unlikely that the response is, at first blush, taken as an unacceptable answer to A's question. In the mother scenario, presumably the mother intended for the child to be amused, and so she has primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate, and to assert that the speaker would say 120a. If the speaker didn't want to assert that, either because it wasn't true or to downplay the mother's contribution in the event, the speaker could say 120b because then speaker would be asserting that just as in the kitten scenario, the action of the mother -- her stories, or rather her story-telling -- rather than the mother herself would have primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate.

Another example, in a monologue sequence, and with an attribute

rather than an activity in the with-phrase, is found in 138 and 139:

138. I could never stand up to Susie. I know she's the soul of kindness and would be aghast if she knew I felt this way, but...
- a. ??she intimidates me with her attitude.
 - b. her attitude intimidates me.
139. I know Charlene's doing it on purpose.
- a. She's intimidating me with her attitude so that I won't take the job.
 - b. *Her attitude is intimidating me so that I won't take the job.

The context of 138 makes clear that there is no intention on Susie's part to bring about the action of the predicate (to intimidate the speaker). As a result, the non-property-factored form 138b is better than the property-factored version 138a. In 139 the opposite is true. The context makes clear that the speaker wishes to assert that there is intention on Charlene's part to intimidate the speaker. In this case, the property-factored version is preferable to the point that the non-property-factored version is totally unacceptable in this context. In the progressive tense, as in 139b, it sounds as if the attitude is endowed with intentionality and control over the occurrence of the action of the predicate.

Another example is found in 140 and 141.

- 140 A: Why did you like John's speech?
 B a: *It impressed me with its brevity.
 b: Its brevity impressed me.
 c: It impressed me.
- 141 A: Which speech did you like the best?
 B a: Well, John's speech impressed me with its brevity.
 b: ??Well, the brevity of John's speech impressed me.

The judgments in 140 are as one would expect from the previous discussion: since John's speech did not have the intention of impressing the speaker B, and since a specific aspect of the speech is included in a with-phrase, the speech does not have the responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate but the aspect -- its brevity -- does. So, 140b is better than 140a. (Note that if an aspect is not mentioned, as in 140c, a sentence reprehensible only for its insipidity, then it is indeed the speech which has the primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate even if not the intention, and so it can again become subject.) In 141, however, it seems to be better to use the property-factored form with John's speech in subject position, even though not John's speech but the brevity of John's speech has primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate. Note that the use of 141a does not seem to imply that John's speech had the intention of impressing the speaker, as the use of 119a seems to imply that the kitten had the intention of amusing the child. This is not due simply to the fact that speeches are inherently less agentive than kittens because, in the first place, kittens are not that agentive and that is precisely what is wrong with 119a, and in the second place, what is wrong with 140a is that the speech sounds too agentive in that sentence. So the sentence structure can force an agentive reading on an entity that is inherently not agentive. John's speech in 141a is an example of a Representor and because it is not introduced before the sentence susceptible to PsychPF, its use in subject position does not make it sound agentive.

4.3.3 OtherPF Sentences

OtherPF sentences (see page 116 above) seem to follow a similar pattern, though certainly much more study should be devoted to them. Thus for example one can devise contexts for 81 from Section 3.3 above which will distinguish between the OtherPF and non-OtherPF structures. I repeat the pair here as 142 and follow with the contexts:

- 142a. Manfred's credulity was criticized.
- b. Manfred was criticized for his credulity.
- 143. What did people find wrong with Manfred?
- a. His credulity was criticized.
- b.??He was criticized for his credulity.
- 144. That group found something wrong with everybody. John was too tall, Mary laughed too much, and
- a.??Manfred's credulity was criticized.
- b. Manfred was criticized for his credulity.

The distribution of this OtherPF sentence and its corresponding non-OtherPF sentence, at least, is very similar to the distribution of ChangePF and PsychPF sentences and their non-ChangePF and non-PsychPF counterparts: when the sentence topic has not been established, as in 144, the OtherPF sentence is most appropriate in order to establish the sentence topic. But if it has already been established, then the responsibility of the attribute for the occurrence of the action of the predicate overrides the necessity of establishing the sentence topic, and a non-OtherPF sentence is better. Thus in order to understand the distribution of property-factoring sentences in discourse, at least the two types studied in depth and probably the other types as well, considerations of topic and, in the case of PsychPF, considerations of agentivity must be taken into account[17].

4.3.4 Conclusions

The PsychPF facts enable us to conclude some very remarkable things about the structure of language. First, as we have seen all along, a special construction endows its subject with a grammaticized meaning which goes a long way to determining when the construction can and cannot be used. In the PsychPF cases, the prototypical subject has intentionality, and this is not determined by the inherent agentivity of the subject but by the sentence structure, so that an entity which is not inherently agentive, like John's speech in 140Ba, will be asserted to have agentivity in that context, and this is what makes the sentence unusable in most scenarios. Thus both 120Ba (page 191) and 140Ba (page 192) assert agentivity:

120 A: How did your three-year-old keep amused while he was recovering?

B a: My mother amused him with her stories.

140 A: Why did you like John's speech?

B a:*It impressed me with its brevity.

In the second place, it is not just subjecthood which conveys this, but the NP's subjecthood in a certain construction. Unlike 140Ba, for example, 140Bc does not sound agentive, even though the subjects are the same.

140 A: Why did you like John's speech?

B c: It impressed me.

But 140Ba and 140Bc are different, though related, constructions, and the grammaticization of the meaning of the subject is different.

In the third place, this construction demonstrates the impact that discourse structure has on the meaning of constructions. When an entity has already been introduced as focus of attention, using it in subject position makes it sound agentive; when it has not earlier been introduced, introducing it in subject position does not make it sound agentive. Thus John's speech is agentive in 140Ba but not in 141Ba:

140 A: Why did you like John's speech?

B a: *It impressed me with its brevity.

141 A: Which speech did you like the best?

B a: Well, John's speech impressed me with its brevity.

This truly remarkable state of affairs seems to be fully grammaticized and regular.

NOTES

- 1 This section is an extensively revised version of a paper presented at the Thirteenth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society in 1977, and published as Van Oosten 1977b. The patient-subject construction has usually been called the "medio-passive" or "middle," cf. Lees 1960, Vendler 1972 and Lysvåg 1975:148f. I do not find that term very helpful, however, in that it implies that the construction is midway between the active and passive constructions. Formally, there is some truth in this, since the patient is in subject position, as in the passive construction, but the verb is active. But connecting the construction with the passive in this way is misleading since, for one thing, not all verbs allowing the passive construction allow the patient-subject or "medio-passive" construction, for example hit:

(i)a Ethel's been hit by a car.

b *Pedestrians hit easily.

More importantly, as I shall argue in this paper, the patient-subject construction should be seen as active and not as half-passive because what is asserted is that properties of the patient subject bear responsibility for the action of the predicate in a way that properties of the agent subject normally do. Since responsibility is what an agent-subject sentence in the active voice asserts about its subject, there is no reason for removing patient-subject sentences from the class of active sentences. To call the construction a middle or medio-passive one is also misleading in that the use of this term leads one to relate the construction to similarly-named constructions in other languages, for example Greek, whereas it is not clear that the so-called medio-passive in English and the middle in Greek are at all comparable. The Greek construction is called middle because it is semantically intermediate between the active and the passive: the subject does the action to or for him/herself or causes the action. If the English construction, on the other hand, is intermediate between active and passive at all, it is so only on formal grounds; semantically, it falls squarely within the active class.

- 2 This example comes from Academic Travel News, Vol. 5, No. 3, November 1983, page 1. I am indebted to Johanna Nichols for bringing it to my attention.
- 3 This reason was pointed out by Paul Postal.
- 4 Several people have pointed out that (18) needs the words easily and

in order to be acceptable; that is, (i) sounds much worse:

(i) *Harry seduces willingly.

In fact I have not found a patient-subject sentence where willingly, by itself, sounds good. I have no ready solution to this restriction; it is all the more baffling because unwillingness can be encoded for a patient-subject, as (ii) shows:

(ii) This floor just refuses to clean.

However, the willingly argument holds because even with easily and, 17 is unacceptable, even though (iii) is acceptable:

(iii) The floor cleaned easily.

The patient-subject construction itself may be a less extreme form of the anthropomorphization metaphor of (ii).

5 I am grateful to Johanna Nichols for pointing out these examples.

7 The sentences in (i) illustrate the fact that when the patient-subject construction is used in a sentence with double accusative, the adverb gets incorporated into the second accusative:

- (i)a They made Jimmy Carter president.
- b Jimmy Carter makes a good president.
- c *They made Jimmy Carter a good president.

8 This section is a revised version of a paper presented to the Canadian Linguistic Association in June 1977 (Van Oosten 1977a).

9 Rather than being closely related to Tough-Construction sentences, it may be that, functionally at least, these sentences are more closely related to sentences like (i),

(i) I don't know him to talk to (??him).

where the infinitival complement states in what respect the main clause is true. Such sentences, however, are themselves not without their own peculiarities. Why, for example, does the object of talk to in (i) occur only in the higher clause, whereas in (ii) it must occur in both the higher and lower clause?

(ii) I only know him to see *(him).

On the other hand, even if sentences like those in 94 turn out to be more closely related to to sentences like (i), there is often not a clearcut distinction between sentences like those in 94 and Tough-Construction sentences. There are sentences for which it is not clear to which category they belong. As a native speaker of English I expect that in the minds of most speakers of (iii), as in mine, it is not clear whether great modifies Mary or to talk to Mary; probably

both notions are present in the speaker's mind.

(iii) Mary is great to talk to.

Similarly, with respect to a sentence like (iv) (cf. Berman 1974:301), my informants frequently stated that it had a meaning for them something like (v):

(iv) Jill is a nice person, but she's unpleasant to argue with.

(v) Jill is a nice person, but she becomes (sort of) unpleasant when you argue with her.

In other words, when the adjective of the Tough-Construction could be one which modifies its subject directly, the sentence tends to be ambiguous as to whether it is a Tough-Construction sentence or one like those in 94. Similarly, a sentence like 87 on page 168 would mean that over-all the cat has a foul temper, but she becomes a pleasant cat when she sits on my lap.

A sentence like (vi) also straddles the fence, but in a different way.

(vi) Fish is good to eat.

This seems to belong to the 94 class, since it does not mean the same as (vii):

(vii) It is good to eat fish.

To verify that this is true, notice the (real-world) oddity of (viii) as opposed to the ditto acceptability of (ix):

(viii) Castor oil is good to eat when you're sick.

(ix) It is good to eat castor oil when you're sick.

Nevertheless, in (x) good does not tend to mean the same as it does in (vi); for that (xi) would be more appropriate:

(x) Fish is good.

(xi) Fish tastes good.

Compare this with 94a and 95c. Compare it also with (xii), which is semantically more closely related to (vii) than with (vi):

(xii) Fish is good for you.

The point of this footnote is to show that in this aspect of language, as in others, the categories with which we are dealing are not discrete but flow into each other. Speakers seem to have a

prototype for each of these two types of sentences, and actually-used sentences match this prototype more or less well. In this framework, if a sentence matches more than one prototype, as (iii) does, then so much the better.

- 10 For some reason, however, 96a sounds much worse than 96c, and the latter, in fact, does not seem to me to differ much in acceptability from 96d. There seems to be more going here than that the subject of the tough-predicate is not in its prototypical position in the embedded infinitive phrase.
- 11 Some speakers accept this sentence, with a meaning equivalent to that of 12a. It seems that the terms denoting ease, including easy, a breeze, a snap and no doubt others, allow the complement to be understood, so that "X is easy (a breeze, a snap, etc.)" can be understood to mean "It is easy to do to X whatever it is that is appropriately done to X." For example, one hears "I'm easy" to mean "It is easy to persuade (seduce, etc.) me." For speakers that accept this truncation, 100a thus exemplifies a nonprototypical, truncated subconstruction of the Tough-Construction, just as the Change-Property-Factoring construction has a truncated subconstruction: Rice has gone up in price can be truncated to Rice has gone up and when this latter sentence is understood to be a truncated version of the former, the meaning of the subject of the truncated version is the same as the meaning of the subject of the full-length version (see Introduction, pages 22f.). Since the description of the subconstruction is based on the description of the full-length construction, its own description does not have to mention the subject. This is the case with both the truncated Change-Property-Factoring subconstruction and the truncated Tough-Construction subconstruction. The theory predicts that in such cases the meaning of the subject of the subconstruction is the same as the meaning of the subject of the main construction, and this is exactly what we get in both the Change-Property-Factoring instance and the Tough-Construction instance.
- Such a truncation does not seem to be possible in sentences like 100b,c. This may be due to the fact that such truncated sentences already have a meaning of their own as basic sentences.

- 12 Actually, for can be used in the same place as according to, as in (i), but then it means something different than it means, for example, in 88 (page 168). In fact it then means very much the same thing as according to.

(i) For Nana, this cake is delicious to eat.

- 13 Again, the situation is not completely clear-cut. In (i), Roger can be the subject of a Tough-Construction even though it is coreferential with the subject of an unreduced subordinate clause:

(i) Roger is tough for me to convince Brigit that he is worth the extra effort to please.

It is not the case that the Roger object of please is deleted by anaphora with he, since (ii) is not acceptable:

(ii) *Roger is worth the extra effort to please.

Interestingly, however, the presence of that he does seem to make the object of please more easily movable, as (iii) shows:

(iii) *Roger is tough for me to convince Brigit that it is worth the extra effort to please.

Compare (iv), and compare this with (ii) of fn. 9:

(iv) Roger is tough for me to convince Brigit that it is worth the extra effort to please him.

14 This section and section 3.3 together constitute a revised version of a paper presented at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, and published as Van Oosten 1980.

15 In PsychPF sentences, unlike non-PsychPF sentences, however, the possessive must be a pronoun; a sentence like (i) is marginal and a sentence like (ii) is totally out:

(i) ??John_i exasperated me with John_i's singing.

(ii) *Mary exasperated me with John's singing.

16 The term "activity" is used here in a different sense than it was used by Vendler (1967). Vendler uses the term in a fourfold classification of verbs into activities, accomplishments, achievements and states. He illustrates the four types of verbs as follows:

For activities: "A was running at time t " means that time instant t is on a time stretch throughout which A was running.

For accomplishments: "A was drawing a circle at time t " means that t is on the time stretch in which A drew the circle.

For achievements: "A won a race between times t_1 and t_2 " means that the time instant at which A won that race is between t_1 and t_2 .

For states: "A loved somebody from time t_1 to t_2 " means that at any instant between t_1 and t_2 A loved that person.

(1967:108)

The notion of activity as it is used in this section, however, can include verbs in three of Vendler's categories: those of (Vendler's)

activities, accomplishments, and achievements, but does not include all verbs in those categories.

- 17 In the original version of this section (Van Oosten 1980) I had another analysis of topics, a kind of a preliminary version to the one presented here. In that paper I proposed that there were sentences without a sentence topic, because I had not conceived of the idea of "Representor of a discourse topic." In the present analysis, every sentence that in the previous analysis did not have a sentence topic, for example (i)B, now has one:

- (i) A: Why isn't Hilary at the party?
B: She's sick.

In the previous analysis the discourse topic of (i) was "why Hilary isn't at the party," and this does not come up in (i)B. However, the Representor of this topic does come up in (i)B. The analysis of this work is therefore an improvement over the previous analysis because it allows us to explain the form of more sentences than the previous one, which had to resort to saying topichood was irrelevant in a number of cases. Further, in Van Oosten 1980 I pointed out possible counterexamples to the analysis presented there, which now can be explained (ibid.:492, fn. 8):

- (ii) Why are you so upset?
a. That shutter is annoying me with its flapping.
b. *The flapping of that shutter is annoying me.
c. The flapping of that shutter annoys me.
d. *That shutter annoys me with its flapping.

In (ii)b the speaker imputes agentivity (perhaps even volition) to the shutter and so it can be the agent; it is also the Representor of the scene of the source of the speaker's annoyance. To attribute agentivity to the shutter permanently, as in (ii)d with its simple present, would be carrying anthropomorphism too far, and so that shutter cannot become subject, not being agentive enough.

Chapter 5

Nonprototypical Subjects: The Passive

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine the functions of the agentive passive. By "passive" I mean any clause or phrase containing the form

1. NP - BE - past participle

or any clause or phrase which is syntactically related to such a structure. For example, 2a is of the form 1 above, and me informed in 2b is related to a structure of the form 1 above:

- 2a. I was informed of all his doings.
- b. My surrogates keep me informed of all your doings.

By "agentive passive" I mean a structure having or syntactically related to the form of 1 above, which has an active counterpart. I will discuss the distinction between agentive and non-agentive passives more fully in section 2 below, the Methodology section, where I also discuss the sources of my data. Note that by "agentive passive" I do not mean a passive sentence with an agent by-phrase.

Since the passive is a marked structure, and therefore nonprototypical, and since it occurs less frequently than the active, I

am assuming that there is something unusual about the relation between form and content in a passive sentence which would warrant an unusual sentence structure. Under that highly uncontroversial assumption, this study corroborates especially the topical nature of prototypical subjects, since the passive is used primarily when the agent and the topic do not overlap, and it is more important to code the topic than to code the agent as such. The function of the passive, then, is to pull the agent out of the focus of attention.

Here I will summarize the uses of the agentless and the agentive agentive passive[1]. In subsequent sections we will look at them in greater detail. Following these summaries, I will give a preliminary discussion of the significance of these results, and compare my work with that of others, specifically that of Jespersen (1924), Thompson (1982) and Givon (1979a). In subsequent sections I will do the following. In Section 2 I will outline the methods I used to find and analyze my data. In Section 3 I return to a more detailed study of agentless passives, especially the Patient-Effect Passive. In Section 4 I study the agentive passives in greater detail. In Section 5 I discuss other methods of avoiding mention of an agent. Section 6 is a discussion of the possible interplay between different syntactic constructions in a single sentence, out of which flows a discussion of the validity of the methodology used in this chapter, and indeed in the whole work. Section 7 contains the conclusions.

5.1.1 The Agentless Passive

There is one main reason for using the agentless passive, namely that the identity of the agent is irrelevant to the progress of the discourse. These reasons can be subdivided into six types, listed and named below:

1. The identity of the agent is irrelevant, "somebody": The Irrelevant-Agent Passive.
2. The agent is very general, "people": The General-Agent Passive.
3. The action of the sentence is a corporate act, with no one agent: The Corporate-Agent Passive.
4. The action of the sentence was not caused by an individual human being, but by a whole situation or scene: The Situation-Agent Passive.
5. The speaker wishes to leave the identity of the agent vague, for such reasons as politeness or expediency, or, sometimes, to reduce the assertion of responsibility for the agent: The Expediency Passive.
6. The emphasis is on the effect of the action on the patient, or on the result, rather than on the action of the agent: The Patient-Effect Passive.

These reasons are not mutually exclusive; an occurrence of a passive sentence can easily be an example of more than one of these reasons. For example, 6 frequently occurs with one of 1 to 4. In fact, reason 6 entails one of reasons 1 to 4; but since the opposite is not the case 6 must also be included in this list. We will see below in Section 5.3 that reason 5 is a conventional use of reason 1: by avoiding mention of the agent, the speaker implies that the agent's identity is irrelevant and thus avoids imputing blame to the agent. Reasons 1 to 4 are, of course, mutually exclusive for logical reasons.

I will give here one example of each of the six types of agentless passive.

The Irrelevant-Agent Passive. The boldface sentence in 3 is an example of a passive where the identity of the agent is irrelevant:

3. Judiciary Committee Transcript[2], page 4
P: Goldwater put it in context, he said "Well, for Christ's sake, everybody bugs everybody else. We know that."
[...]
Well, it's true. It happens to be totally true. [...] We were bugged in '68 on the plane and bugged in '62, uh, even running for Governor. God dammedest thing you every saw.

The question of who bugged Nixon and company in '68 and '62 is irrelevant: the fact that they were bugged is the important thing.

The General-Agent Passive. The other types of agentless passives are actually special cases of the first. An example of an agentless passive in which the agent is very general is found in 4:

4. JC:84
D: [speaking of the plans for the Watergate Break-In and why Magruder, the person in charge, hadn't kept Liddy under closer surveillance] Jeb is not a lawyer. He didn't know whether this was the way the game was played, or not, and what it was all about.

Clearly, Dean means by this agentless passive clause something like "the way people in general play the game." But as you can tell from this paraphrase, putting people in general in subject position would give them far too much emphasis.

The Corporate-Agent Passive. In 5 are found two examples of an agentless passive clause where the action of the sentence is a corporate act, that is, an act of a group of people acting together or in relay, so that the act has no one individual agent. Using an agentless passive allows one to avoid the problem of what kind of noun to put in subject position to refer to this corporate agent:

5. JC:103

D: Kalmbach received at the close of the, of the, uh, '68 campaign, in January of '69, he got a million seven dollars, uh, a million seven hundred thousand dollars to be custodian for. That came down from New York. It was placed in safe deposit boxes here. Uh, some other people were on the boxes, and ultimately, the money was taken out to California. All right, there is knowledge of the fact that he did start out with a million seven.

Although Kalmbach was responsible for the money the whole time, the actual act of taking it to California, and perhaps also the act of putting it in the safe deposit box in Washington, was done by someone else. This is what is conveyed by the use of the agentless passives here when surrounding these two passives Kalmbach is the subject. Again, it does not really matter exactly who took the money to California, and so this use of the agentless passive is again a special case of the first use: the agent is irrelevant.

The Situation-Agent Passive. The fourth reason for using an agentless passive is similar to the third, except that this time the agent, so-called, may not be a group of humans but a scene. An example is has been hampered in 6:

6. JC:102

D: Uh, another thing is, you know, my facility now to deal with the multitude of people I have been dealing with has been hampered because of Gray's blowing me up into the front page.

There is no one agent responsible for the action of the predicate. Gray's action of blowing a story about Dean up in the papers is responsible more than anything else, according to Dean. This is better off in a because of-phrase than as subject.

The Expediency Passive. The fifth reason to use an agentless passive is to avoid saying who the agent is for reasons of politeness or expediency or some similar reason. This is actually a special case of the irrelevant-agent passive because it is by pretending that the identity of the agent is irrelevant or that "everybody does it" that a user of this type of passive accomplishes his or her aim of hiding the identity of the agent. An example is found in 7. All through the conversation the three speakers are fairly indirect about how they plan to strike back at the Washington Post for its work in uncovering the Watergate affair, and as a way of striking back at Edward Bennett Williams, the Post's attorney and the attorney for the Democratic National Committee. The use of the agentless passive at the end of the passage quoted here is simply another case of this indirectness: it would not do to have to admit that the President and company played the game roughly, though that is patently what is meant:

7. JC:15

- P: The main thing is the Post is going to have damnable, damnable problems out of this one. They have a television station
D: That's right, they do.
P: and they're going to have to get it renewed.
H: They've got a radio station, too.
P: Does that come up too? The point is, when does it come up?
D: I don't know. But the practice of non-licensees filing on top of licensees has certainly gotten more,
P: That's right.
D: more active in the, in the area.
P: And it's going to be God damn more active here.
D: [Laughs]
P: Well, the game has to be played awfully rough.

It is expedient to leave their own agency out of the spotlight. By doing this they imply that everybody has to "play the game" roughly, and

their own responsibility in doing it is reduced somewhat.

The Patient-Effect Passive. In the following example, the agent is perhaps irrelevant; but that is not so important as the effect of the action on the patient. This is the only reason for using the agentless passive where what is important is the prominence of the patient rather than the elimination of the agent:

8. NSFM:48[3]

At school, all the kids were Italian and the teachers were all Irish. In those days the teachers always made you feel inferior. I remember them being very rough, even though I don't remember ever being spanked myself. I remember teachers referring to us as "guinea kids" and using the word "wop."

The emphasis in the boldface sentence is the effect on the patient of the spanking rather than on who did it, even though the general identity of the agents -- the teachers -- is abundantly clear from context, and even though the teachers are mentioned as agent in the previous sentence as well as in the very next sentence, which has exactly the same structure as the boldface sentence except that it is active. The difference in the middle one of the three sentences, it seems to me, is that the effect of a spanking on single individual patient is more specific than the effect of "being very rough" on a group, and is considered more drastic than the effect on a group of being called names. Certainly it is a more prototypical effect for a patient, and would be more memorable if the patient in question was the speaker! In Section 3 I will investigate further the difference between the Patient-Effect Passive and the Agent-Irrelevant Passive.

5.1.2 The Agented Agentive Passive

I have found six reasons for using the agented passive, three major (more frequent) ones and three minor (less frequent) ones. In the following, the first three are major reasons to use the passive and the last three are minor reasons:

1. The identity of the object of the by-phrase is of transitory interest in the discourse: The Transitory-Agent Passive.
2. The patient is the focus of attention: The Focus-of-Attention Passive.
3. The object of the by-phrase would be understood too agentively if subject of an active sentence: The Less-Agentive Passive.
4. The object of the by-phrase has less responsibility, specifically blame, than would be asserted if it were subject of an active sentence: The Irresponsibility Passive.
5. The object of the by-phrase is new, and is to be the new sentence topic: The New-Topic Passive.
6. The object of the by-phrase is emphasized, for reasons of contrast, outrage, etc.: The Emphatic-Agent Passive.

All but the second of these are reasons for taking the agent out of subject position. The second, however, is a reason for putting the patient in subject position.

The Transitory-Agent Passive. The first reason mentioned above is essentially the same as the major reason for using the agentless passive, the Irrelevant-Agent Passive. An example is given in 9. William C. Sullivan was a former FBI official who was at this time offering to divulge some information he had about allegedly illegal doings by former FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who had died the previous year. Sullivan was interested in doing this both because Hoover had fired him and in order to get into Nixon's good graces because he wanted the President to reappoint him to a post in the FBI:

9. JC:56

P: No problem with Sullivan. We'll put him-- I mean, he's a valuable man. Uh, now, would the FBI then turn on him, piss on him?

D: There would be some effort at that. That's right, they would say he's disgruntled. He was canned by Hoover. He is angry, he's coming back.

The interchange in 9 comes from a discussion between Nixon and Dean on whether to use this information or not as a red herring in the Watergate hearings. Hoover is a tangential figure, though important in the sentence in which he occurs for an understanding of why Sullivan might be disgruntled about Hoover.

The Focus-of-Attention Passive. This is the one type of Agented Passive where what is important is moving the patient into subject position rather than moving the agent out of it. An example is found in 10.

10. NSFM:48

...When the Italians first came to this country they were so abused that they had to do something. They did what some of them knew best, and that was to shoot. I think the shooting was done for survival, to protect themselves.

They were being abused by the Irish a lot. They couldn't get jobs and when they did, they were second-class jobs. And when they went to church, in the Irish church, the Italians would have to sit at the back. The Italians weren't even permitted to pray at the same altar. Then also, for what I've heard, a lot of the children went to school with their little sandwich, you know, with peppers and eggs and broccoli or something like that, and the teachers would poke fun at them. So the kids didn't want to go to school.

So these were the problems that caused the Mafia.

In this passage the focus of attention is the Italians throughout. The Irish are mentioned for a period of time as the bane of their existence. It is interesting to notice that the Irish are always mentioned in a syntactically oblique way, except that the [Irish]

teachers occurs in subject position, though even that is in a second coordinate clause.

The Less-Agentive Passive. Sometimes the passive form of a sentence makes an agent in the by-phrase sound less agentive than the corresponding active would, where the agent is in subject position. By "less agentive" I mean that the agent is asserted to have fewer agent properties, and especially, that the agent did not intend for the action of the predicate to come about, or did not wish it, or did not have (full) responsibility for the action of the predicate's coming about. An example of an agented passive sentence where the object of the by-phrase would be understood too agentively if it were subject of an active sentence, is found in 11:

11. NSFM:150
But when my mother died in '65, my father came around to me and we've been the best of friends ever since. He really needed me when my brother died last year. It hurt him so bad. My brother got hit by a car and he died from a blood clot in his leg.

The car is also only of transitory interest, and so this could be considered to be a Transitory-Agent Passive, but unlike the passive in 9, using the passive in 11 also reduces the agentivity of the car. Compare the passive in 9, repeated here in 12a, with the active counterpart in 12b: the agent in the one does not seem to be more agentive than in the other. But the passive in 11, repeated here as 13a, does make the car out to be less agentive than the active counterpart in 13b, where it sounds as if the car had the intention of hitting the brother:

- 12a. ...They would say [Sullivan's] disgruntled. He was canned by Hoover. He is angry, he's coming back.
- b. ...They would say he's disgruntled. Hoover canned him. He is angry, he's coming back.
- 13a. ...[My father] really needed me when my brother died last year. It hurt him so bad. My brother got hit by a car and he died from a blood clot in his leg.
- b. ...He really needed me when my brother died last year. It hurt him so bad. A car hit my brother and he died from a blood clot in his leg.

The Irresponsibility Passive. The fourth reason to use an agented passive is to diminish the responsibility of the object of the by-phrase in the action of the predicate. An example is given in 14, where using the passive diminishes the implication of Magruder's responsibility in the event:

14. JC:86
- D: I called Liddy, uh, on that Monday morning, and I said, "Gordon," I said, "first, I want to know if anybody in the White House was involved in this." And he said, "No, they weren't." I said, "Well, I want to know how in God's name this happened." And he said, "Well, I was pushed without mercy by Magruder to get in there, get more information, that the information, it was not satisfactory."

If Dean had reported Liddy as saying 15,

15. Well, Magruder pushed me without mercy to get in there and get more information.

he would have made Liddy sound as if he were trying to shift the blame for the failed break-in from himself to Magruder. By putting the sentence in the passive and I in the subject position, Dean manages to lessen the force of this implication considerably.

The New-Topic Passive. Of course a Transitory Agent can also be new in

the sense that the speaker assumes that the Transitory Agent is not in the hearer's consciousness at the moment of speaking and cannot be easily inferred. The difference with the New-Topic Passive, however, is that the new agent is not transitory, but, on the contrary, is to be the new focus of attention. An example is found in 16:

16. NSFM:314 (spoken by a man)
 I was never home as a kid. [...] I was always roaming around. I was born out of wedlock so I was raised by my grandfather, who was very hard with me at times. But he was a strong influence because he was very politically oriented in his own oppressed way.
 My grandfather was a crew leader...

Before the passive, the sentence topic is fairly consistently the speaker. After the passive, the sentence topic is the grandfather. The passive sentence is a type of a "hinge sentence," used to turn from the one sentence topic to the other. Livia Polanyi (p.c.) calls this type of sentence a "Janus sentence," because it looks both ways: the beginning of the sentence looks to the old sentence topic, and the end of the sentence looks to the new sentence topic.

The Emphatic-Agent Passive. An example of an agented passive where the object of the by-phrase is in contrast is given in 17:

17. JC:45f.
 P: ...Let's forget this, remember, this was not done by the White house. This was done by the Committee to Re-Elect, and Mitchell was the Chairman, correct?

These contrasted elements seem to go better at the ends of their respective sentence than at the beginning. Compare 18:

18. ...Remember, the White House didn't do this, the Committee to

Re-Elect did it, and Mitchell was the Chairman, right?

The first element of contrast, the White House, is not new: it is a Representor of the discourse topic under which they have been speaking all along: how to avoid getting routed by the Watergate scandal.

However, the White House has not been the sentence topic for a while before this. The other object of the by-phrase, the Committee to Re-Elect (the President), is not a new sentence topic either, but a way to get to the new sentence topic, which is Mitchell.

5.1.3 The Significance of the Functions of the Passive

Above we have seen six reasons to use the agentless passive and six reasons to use the agented passive. Since most of the reasons on these lists have to do with why a certain element does not become the subject, the complements of these reasons plus the positive reasons should form a class of reasons to use the subject. These would be as follows:

A. Reasons for making something the subject, based on the reasons for using an agentless passive:

1. Converse of the Irrelevant-Agent Passive: the identity of the surface subject is relevant.
2. Converse of the General-Agent Passive: the surface subject is someone or something more specific and salient in the discourse than the agent.
3. Converse of the Corporate-Agent Passive: the surface subject is an individual and acting as an individual.

4. Converse of the Situation-Agent Passive: the action of the sentence is caused by an individual human being, perhaps a Representor of a situation, schema or scene.
5. Converse of the Expediency Passive: the agent is held to be responsible for his or her action.
6. From the Patient-Effect Passive: what is important is the role of the referent of the subject in the event or situation.

B. Reasons for making something the subject, based on reasons for using the agented passive:

1. Converse of the Transitory-Agent Passive: the surface subject is of more abiding interest in the discourse than the object of the by-phrase.
2. Converse of the Irresponsibility Passive: the surface subject has more responsibility, including blame where appropriate, than the object of the by-phrase.
3. Converse of the Less-Agentive Passive: the referent of the surface subject is more inherently agentive than the referent of the object of the by-phrase; particularly, it has more intentionality.
4. From the Focus-of-Attention Passive: the surface subject is the focus of attention.
5. Converse of the New-Agent Passive: the surface subject is assumed

by the speaker to be in the hearer's consciousness.

6. Converse of the Contrasted-Agent Passive: the surface subject is not in contrast but rather holds the spotlight by itself.

This research on the passive thus corroborates the idea that the prototypical subject in English is both an agent and a topic, and that marked sentence structures are used to code nonprototypical subjects. Bates and MacWhinney suggest (1982:214) that prototypical subjects in English have two clusters of features: first, they are agents, and second, they are topics. Prototypical topics are what is being talked about, an entity which is given, seen from the speaker's perspective, and salient (*ibid.*:199ff.). We have seen in Chapter 2 that the topic is also the point of shared attention between speaker and hearer, and that prototypical sentence topics refer to basic-level objects. Bates and MacWhinney also suggest that prototypical agents are physical objects, and bear features like "animacy," "intention," "cause," and "human" (*ibid.*:217). We have seen in Chapter 4 that another important property of agents is that they are responsible for the occurrence of the action of the sentence. (Bates and MacWhinney's notion "cause" includes this notion.) Thus the referents of prototypical subjects in English are basic-level physical objects, human and animate, with intention, causation and responsibility; and are given, what is being talked about, seen from the speaker's perspective, salient, and the point of shared attention between speaker and hearer.

The converses of reasons to use the passive are aspects of the prototypical properties proposed for subjects above. Converses

A.1,2,3,4,6 and B.1,4,5 are aspects of the topic property of prototypical subjects, and converses A.3,4,5 and B.2,3 are aspects of the agenthood property of prototypical subjects:

A.1 (Converse of Irrelevant-Agent Passive) To say that the identity of the surface subject is relevant is to say precisely that it is part of a discourse topic.

A.2 (Converse of General-Agent Passive) Salience and Specificity are aspects of prototypical topics.

A.3 (Converse of Corporate-Agent Passive) The prototypical sentence topic is an individual human being. The prototypical agent acts as an individual rather than as a group.

A.4 (Converse of Situation-Agent Passive) The prototypical sentence topic is a basic-level object, a Representor of the situation, schema or scene. The prototypical agent is a basic-level object: a human being.

A.5 (Converse of the Expediency Passive) The prototypical agent has responsibility for his or her action.

A.6 (From the Patient-Effect Passive) The agent is the sentence topic.

B.1 (Converse of the Transitory-Agent Passive) The prototypical sentence topic perseveres in the speaker's and the hearer's attention.

B.2 (Converse of the Irresponsibility Passive) The prototypical agent has responsibility for his or her actions.

B.3 (Converse of the Less-Agentive Passive) The prototypical agent has the intention to accomplish its action.

B.4 (From the Focus-of-Attention Passive) the prototypical subject is

the focus of attention.

B.5 (Converse of the New-Agent Passive) The prototypical topic is already in the hearer's consciousness, having been put there previously by the speaker (for example, in an agent by-phrase in a passive sentence).

B.6 (Converse of the Contrasted-Agent Passive) The prototypical topic is the focus of attention, and part of what it means to be the focus of attention is to not have to share the spotlight with anything else -- in other words, to be uniquely the focus of attention.

The research on passive thus corroborates the proposal that the category of subject has prototype structure, and that the central-tendency member is both an agent and a topic: the complement of the set of reasons for using the passive is logically equivalent to the set of characteristics of the prototypical (basic-sentence) subject, as we saw in Chapter 1 (pages 15f.).

My findings on the uses of the passive also corroborate the conclusions by Hopper and Thompson (1980) on Transitivity. Their notion of transitivity is somewhat different from the traditional one. According to Hopper and Thompson, a clause is higher in transitivity the more it has of each of the following component parts (ibid.:252):

	<u>High Transitivity</u>	<u>Low Transitivity</u>
A. Participants	2 or more participants, A and O[4]	1 participant
B. Kinesis	action	non-action
C. Aspect	telic	atelic
D. Punctuality	punctual	non-punctual
E. Volitionality	volitional	non-volitional
F. Affirmation	affirmative	negative

G. Mode	realis	irrealis
H. Agency	A high in potency	A low in potency
I. Affectedness of O	O totally affected	O not affected
J. Individuation of O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

Hopper and Thompson suggest the following transitivity hypothesis:

If two clauses (a) and (b) in a language differ in that (a) is higher in Transitivity according to any of the features [A-J], then, if a concomitant grammatical or semantic difference appears elsewhere in the clause, that difference will also show (a) to be higher in Transitivity.

Hopper and Thompson point out that passives tend to have one argument less than their active counterparts, since agentless passives are much more common than agented passives (cf. Svartvik 1967, Givón 1979a), and point out the following ways in which facts about the English passive corroborate the Transitivity Hypothesis:

Svartvik found that extensive text counts reveal that, among passive sentences in English, 81% have inanimate subjects, as compared to 27% inanimate subjects for active sentences. ... Further, as Svartvik shows, a greater percentage of passives than actives in English have verbs in the perfect or past perfect, which are low-Transitivity tenses (26%:19%), and are found with modals, again a low-Transitivity property (30% more).

My research augments these earlier findings by showing that the uses of the passive also corroborate Hopper and Thompson's Transitivity Hypothesis in that, if using the passive effects a semantic change at all, then it is in the direction of lower transitivity, in Hopper and Thompson's sense: the agent is understood as being less agentive (Hopper and Thompson's H in the chart above), with less responsibility. Further, my data can support the idea that transitivity is lowered not only when O is less individuated, but also when A is less individuated, since passive is more appropriate when the agent is corporate or not even a human being but a situation, scene or schema, as I discussed

above.

5.1.4 Previous Research

My findings generally corroborate and expand findings by Jespersen (1924), Givón (1979a) and Thompson (1982). Jespersen summarizes the uses of the passive as follows (1924:167):

We use the active or passive turn according as we shift our point of view from one to the other of the primaries contained in the sentence. ... As a rule the person or thing that is the centre of the interest at the moment is made the subject of the sentence, and therefore the verb must in some cases be put in the active, in others in the passive.

Jespersen enumerates the following reasons for using the passive (1924:167f.):

1. "The active subject is unknown or cannot easily be stated":

19. He was killed in the Boer War.

2. "The active subject is self-evident from the context":

20. She told me that her master had dismissed her. No reason had been assigned; no objection had been made to her conduct. She had been forbidden to appeal to her mistress.

3. "There may be a special reason (tact or delicacy of sentiment) for not mentioning the active subject."

21. Enough has been said here of a subject which will be treated more fully in a subsequent chapter.

4. "Even if the active subject is indicated, ... the passive turn is

preferred if one takes naturally a greater interest in the passive than in the active subject":

- 22a. His son was run over by a motor car.
- b. His house was struck by lightning.

5. "The passive turn may facilitate the connexion of one sentence with another":

23. He rose to speak and was listened to with enthusiasm by the great crowd present.

The first three of the above reasons are reasons for using the agentless passive; the last two are reasons for using the agented passive. In my corpora I have not found any occurrences of an agentless passive where either the identity of the agent or the type of agent was unknown; cf. also Givón 1979a:57-62, where he asserts the same thing. I would say that example 19 above is rather a case where the identity of the agent is irrelevant, and that, in any case, the type of agent is known from context. As regards the second reason, there are so many occurrences of same-subject sequences of active sentences that it is unlikely that the fact that the identity of an agent is recoverable from context is enough to trigger a passive. The sequence of passives in 18 seems to me rather to be a case of the Patient-Effect Passive: what is important is the result the action has on the patient rather than the action of the agent. The third reason is part of my Agent-Expediency Passive. The examples given under Jespersen's fourth reason, 22a,b, participate in all three of the Transitory-Agent Passive, the Irresponsibility Passive, and the Less-Agentive Passive. The final one of Jespersen's reasons is

the same as the Transitory-Agent Passive for agented passives and the Agent-Irrelevant Passive for agentless passives. The important thing is not so much the maintenance of the same subject across sentences but the maintenance of the topic in subject position. What Jespersen's enumeration of the uses of the passive misses is an appreciation of the role of topic in the decision to use a passive sentence: an idea whose time had not yet come at the time Jespersen was writing.

Givón (1979:57) says about the uses of the passive:

In general, the function of passive sentences in language is to code sentences in the context in which the non-agent is more topical. This automatically means that the agent is less topical in a passive sentence, and the fact that it gets removed ("demoted") from the subject slot -- the one which usually coincides with the topic -- is an obvious means of achieving this end.

My only quibble with this generalization of the situation is that when one looks in detail at the uses of the passive, it seems that what is most often the case is that the passive is used because the agent is less topical, that is, it is used in order to remove the agent from subject position, rather than being used because the non-agent is more topical, that is, in order to move the non-agent to subject position. The result is the same: because the agent is less topical, the non-agent is more topical[5].

I must take issue, however, with Givón's discussion of agented passives. He says:

...When an overt agent appears in passive sentences in text, it is close to 90% of the time indefinite, that is, new information. As an example consider:

24. He was beaten to death a minute later by an enraged

wino...

Further, even when the overt agent of passive is definite, it is clear that it constitutes part of the new information imparted by the sentence. Thus consider:

25. Or had some planet whose business was being ruined by Earth triggered off this flood?
26. It had been built by the Titanic and Icarus Spaceship Company, Inc., which didn't inspire confidence...

If almost 90% of the agented passives in Givón's corpus are of the type in 24 and others are of the type in 25 and 26, all quite new information, then there must have been very few agented passives in Givón's corpus which had old information in the by-phrase. In my corpus of mostly spoken English, on the other hand, I found that the 74 agented passives I investigated for this mini-study divided up in the following way:

Type of Agented Passive	Agent Old or New?	Number	Percentage of total	
1. Agent in immediately-preceding context	old	9	12%	} 63% old
2. Agent mentioned in earlier context	old	18	24%	
3. Agent inferrable from preceding context	old	20	27%	
4. Agent brand-new but definite	new	8	11%	} 37% new
5. Agent brand-new and indefinite	new	19	26%	

In 27 is an example of an agented passive in which the agent has been mentioned in the immediately-preceding context; in 28 is an example of an agented passive where the agent was mentioned earlier in the context;

in 29 is an example of an agented passive where the agent is inferrable from the context; in 30 is an example of an agented passive where the agent is brand-new (though perhaps inferrable from context, if one works at it) but definite; and in 31 is an example of an agented passive where the agent is brand-new.

27. NSFM:51
In those days, the Rand School was attached to the union movement, and for twenty years I was afraid to tell people I had attended the Rand school for fear they would think I was a Communist. The only people who attended the Rand School in those days were the ultra-radicals. But all my education was paid for by the union.
28. NSFM:419f.
The pain was still undiagnosed and every time I'd go back to the doctor I'd say, "Do something for me, please. Find out what it is." [...]
[next paragraph:] So I went on this way for two months, and finally I decided that I'd better get some more help. I got the name of a doctor who specialized in neurology. [...]
[next paragraph:] He examined me [...] And he gave me more Percodan for the pain, but he said, "I want to warn you that that is an addicting drug, so be careful in how you use it." I hadn't been warned about this by my regular doctor.
29. NSFM:90
My mother was divorced when I was fourteen months old. She had to go out to work, so I was raised by my grandparents. I was an only child and they spoiled me rotten.
30. NSFM:95
When we first moved to Morton Street it was a very mixed area. At school it was about 40 percent Jewish and 60 percent non-Jewish. And there were fights. When the kids came out of Hebrew School they were beaten up by the Irish. Way back there was an Irish builder who bought a lot of property in Mattapan and brought in the first Irish families. They were looked down on by the Protestants something terrible because of the umpteen children.
31. NSFM:366
There's a new group that just started that has a chapter in Birmingham called Families for Action, and another group called something like Prisoners Survival Committee, started by a black man who'd been in jail for thirteen years and just got out last year.

Thus even though the category of objects of the by-phrase that are indefinite and totally new in context is a large group, it does not by any means constitute the majority of cases in my corpus. These findings accord with my findings on the reasons for using the passive: only one of them, the New-Agent Passive, has to do with the information status of the object of the by-phrase.

Thompson (1982) gives the following three-part ordered statement as a strategy for using the passive:

- A. If the agent is not to be mentioned, use the passive.
- B. If the agent is to be mentioned, then use the passive only when the non-agent is more closely related than the agent either
 - B.1. to the "theme" of the "paragraph," or
 - B.2. to a participant in the immediately preceding clause

My research, both in this chapter and in Chapter 2, serves to make these ideas more precise: why is an agent not to be mentioned? and how is the mention of one particular entity in the sentence related to the "theme" of an entire passage? and when is it important to continue the mention of an entity already mentioned, and when is it not important, and when is it important not to? We have seen above, and will see below in greater detail, that usually it is the case that the agent is not to be mentioned, but in a minority of cases the passive, even the agentless passive, is used to highlight the patient. We have also seen, in Chapter 2, that a basic object, usually a human being, is the Representor of a schema or scene which is a discourse topic at the point of the utterance in question. The reason one is likely to want to

maintain as subject something that has been mentioned before is that it is more likely to be a sentence topic than something which has not yet been mentioned. A case in point is the following example from Thompson's paper, her 26. The passage is entire in itself, constituting a complete radio news item:

32. As the first group of about 1000 Salvadoran soldiers began training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, protesters outside the gates shouted slogans and carried signs. The soldiers are being trained by the Green Berets as part of a military assistance agreement between the U.S. and El Salvador. At a news conference today, protesters compared the plan to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and said the U.S. is sitting on the edge of a volcano in El Salvador.

Thompson says about this passage (pages 12f.):

In this paragraph, which constitutes one complete item of news, it is simply not the case that soldiers is more thematic than Green Berets: the paragraph is about the protest. Why, then, is the passive chosen at this point in the discourse? The answer, as suggested in B.2 of [Thompson's strategy for passive use] above, is that the non-agent, the soldiers, is more closely related, identical in fact, to a participant in the immediately preceding clause than the agent is.

There are two problems with this. First of all, it is not the case, as is implied, that this passage can be analyzed independently of anything else because it is one complete item of news. The newscasters are depending on listeners knowing the background of the event, as is shown by the structure of the first sentence: it is presupposed that people knew that Salvadoran soldiers were going to go to Fort Bragg to receive training from the Green Berets. It may be the case that this is the first time a listener fresh back from the Sierras heard about it, but that listener has to infer the background from the structure of the first sentence, and has to infer that Fort Bragg is a Green Berets base

from the second sentence. The first sentence evokes a whole scene, which includes the Salvadoran soldiers, the Green Berets (via the mention of Fort Bragg), and the protesters outside the gates. This is the discourse topic of the passage.

In the second place, the Green Berets are also, if not mentioned, at least strongly evoked, in the first sentence, via the mention of Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Partial evidence for this comes from intonation: I suspect very strongly that in the second sentence the newscaster did not put clause stress on the Green Berets but rather on trained, indicating that the Green Berets is old information, evoked by Fort Bragg in the first sentence. No matter how the newscaster did pronounce this sentence, this is certainly a possible intonation.

The "theme" is no more the protesters than it is the Salvadorans or the Green Berets: the "theme," taking this term to mean the same as "topic," specifically discourse topic, includes all three. However, in Hopper and Thompson's (1980) terms, the protesters are at the foreground of the story while what is going on inside the base forms the background. In Hopper and Thompson's terms, the as-clause in the first sentence and the entire second sentence are background to the story and the protesters are foreground; but in the background the Salvadorans are the focus of attention and not the Green Berets. This is then a case of the Focus-of-Attention Passive: since the Salvadorans are more topical than the Green Berets, being the focus of attention, they get to be subject.

5.2 Methodology

This study is based on a close analysis of instances of agentless and agented passive in a book of edited oral histories, Seifer 1976, and in the Judiciary-Committee version of eight of the Nixon conversations (Rodino 1974)[6]. The total came to 84 agented passives and about 1215 agentless passives. By examining the context of each passive use and testing how the corresponding active would sound there, I came up with reasons why the passive sounded appropriate in the particular context. This was an armchair endeavor; I did not check my own intuitions with those of others unless I was unsure of myself.

Seifer 1976 is called "Nobody Speaks for Me! Self-Portraits of American Working Class Women" and gives about 388 pages of interview, given, in the Studs Terkel Working fashion, mostly in monologue style. The text we have is therefore farther from spoken English than it might be in that the interviews have been fairly heavily edited: I suspect that sections have been rearranged; and all the questions of the interviewer have been eliminated, which no doubt necessitated other changes in the text to keep it flowing. Nevertheless, I am assuming that the passives, and their contexts, reflect the actual spoken situation fairly faithfully, since it is unlikely that an editor, given editors' well-known aversion to passives, would have edited very many of them in, though some may have been edited out.

As mentioned in footnote 1, I am concentrating in this chapter only on what have been called agentive passives by Svartvik (1966) and Thompson (1982): those which have a counterpart in the active voice with an agentive entity -- one with intentionality, volition, control and responsibility to a greater or lesser extent -- in subject position. For example, 1a is an agentive passive because it has an active counterpart as in 1b; but 2a is a non-agentive passive because it does not have an active counterpart, as is shown in 2b:

- 1a. The current measles epidemic has been related to insufficient cheesecake in the diet.
- b. A leading East-Coast doctor has related the current measles epidemic to insufficient cheesecake in the diet.
- 2a. John is related to Mary.
- b. *The preacher related John to Mary.

Some passive sentences are ambiguous as to whether they are agentive or non-agentive, as for example 3:

- 3. The sidewalk was cracked.

In one sense of 3 there is an agent which can be expressed, as in 4; in the other sense there is no agent and 3 expresses rather a stative idea, which accounts for its ability to be used in the simple present tense, as in 5; the use of the simple present tense (when used to express a stative idea, in other words, not in a play-by-play sense or such) is incompatible with mention of an agent, as 6 shows:

- 4. The sidewalk was cracked by the big man wielding a sledge hammer.
- 5. The sidewalk is cracked.
- 6. *The sidewalk is cracked by the big man wielding a sledge hammer.

The four terms, agentive, non-agentive, agentless and agented, together are used to express three types of passive: agentive agentless passives, agentive agented passives, and non-agentive passives. Non-agentive passives must, of course, be agentless; agented non-agentive passives are a logical impossibility. In the sentences above, 1a is an agentive agented passive; 2a is a non-agentive passive; 3 is either an agentive agentless passive or a non-agentive passive; 4 is, like 1a, an agentive agented passive; and 5 is, like 2a, a non-agentive passive. Svartvik (1966), Thompson (1982) and Givon (1979a) all use the terms "agentless" and "agented" for the two types of agentive passives.

5.3 Agentless Agentive Passives

In this section we will look at some more examples exhibiting the different reasons to use the agentless agentive passive. We will also look at some examples demonstrating the difference between an Irrelevant-Agent Passive and a Patient-Effect Passive. We will also see that the Patient-Effect Passive is exploited most obviously with resultant-state passives; in existential constructions; in embedded constructions after want, keep, have and the like; attributively; and with get-passives.

5.3.1 Further Examples of the Functions of the Agentless Passive

5.3.1.1 The Irrelevant-Agent Passive

When an agent is mentioned, hearers are inclined to suppose that the agent has some relevance to the scene, which, if it is not evident right away, may become evident later. The following contains the same example twice:

1. JC:8

D: The, uh, GAO [General Accounting Office] report that was referred over to Justice is on a shelf right now because they have hundreds of violations. They've got violations of McGovern's; they've got violations of Humphrey's; they've got Jackson violations, and several hundred Congressional violations. They don't want to start prosecuting one any more than they want the other. So that's, uh--

P: They damn well not prosecute us unless they prosecute all the others.

D: That's right. That's right. Well, we are really talking about technical violations that were referred over also.

If Dean had mentioned the agent of refer as in 2,

2. The GAO report that Mr. Smith referred over to Justice is on a shelf right now ... Well, we are really talking about technical violations that Mr. Smith referred over also.

the interlocutors would be waiting to hear, I think, what specific relevance Mr. Smith had to the entire affair, and would feel let down, if they remembered, when information about that relevance were not sooner or later forthcoming. Of course, a lot of infelicities of construction choice are implicitly forgiven because the interlocutors forget that they were waiting for such information.

In 3 is another example.

3. JC:32

P: I mean, Ervin is as partisan as most of our Southern

gentlement are. They, they, they are great politicians. They're just more clever than the minority. Just more clever.

D: Well, I'm, I'm convinced it may be shown that he is merely a puppet for Kennedy in this whole thing.

Since Dean does not know who the actual person would turn out to be, if he put the sentence in the passive the subject would have to be an indefinite, as in 4:

4. I'm convinced someone may show that Ervin is merely a puppet for Kennedy in this whole thing.

Upon hearing this sentence, an interlocutor would be entitled to believe that the identity of this someone would be relevant at some point, in other words, that Dean is using someone referentially. This implication, if false, can be avoided by the use of a passive.

5.3.1.2 The General-Agent Passive

In a General-Agent Passive, any one of a class of people can be subject of the corresponding active sentence and the sentence would be equally true. This is the difference with an Agent-Irrelevant Passive: in an Agent-Irrelevant Passive there is only one agent, though the specific identity of the agent may be irrelevant or even unknown, as in 3. Two examples, at least, of a General-Agent Passive are found in 5:

5. JC:14

H: The only tie [the Grand Jury investigation of summer 1972 had been able to make] to the White House has been the Colson effort they keep trying to haul in.

D: And now, of course,

H: That's falling apart.

D: the two former White House people, low level, indicted, one consultant and one member of the Domestic Council staff. That's not very much of a tie.

H: No.
P: Well, **their names have been already mentioned.**
D: Oh, **they've been--**
P: Voluminous accounts.
H: And it's, it's been discounted--
P: You know, **they've already been convicted in the press.**
D: Absolutely.

The two passive sentences in boldface have general agents. That the first one, have been already mentioned, is intended to have a general agent is made clear by the President's continuing with "voluminous accounts," and that the second passive, they've already been convicted, is intended to have a general agent, is made clear by the continuation in the press. The active counterpart would have people in subject position rather than somebody as in the case of the Agent-Irrelevant Passive:

- 6a. Well, people have already mentioned their names.
- b. You know, people have already convicted them in the press.

Again, using people in subject position entitles one to ask, "Who?" -- because it can be that the identity of the subject is intended to be understood as relevant to the whole discourse. It is harder to ask this question when the passive is used -- it is possible, but would constitute deflecting the progress of the discourse.

The nature of Haldeman's passive in the above passage ("it's been discounted...") is difficult to ascertain because he does not have the chance to complete the sentence.

Many General-Agent Passives are negative:

- 7. JC:9
D: Uh, there is some bitterness between, for example, the

Finance Committee and the Political Committee. They feel that they're taking all the heat, and, and, uh, all the people upstairs are bad people and they're not being recognized.

8. JC:5

D: ...The Stans libel action was assigned to Judge Richey.

P: Oh, Christ.

D: Well, now that's good and bad. Uh, Judge Richey is not known to be one of the intellectuals on the bench. That's conceded by many that he is, uh, uh--

In both cases, people in general are the agent, not just a single individual whose identity is irrelevant or unknown.

9. People do not know Judge Richey as one of the intellectuals on the bench.

Nevertheless, it is not the case that the class of people who could become subject of the active sentence corresponding to a General-Agent Passive has to be large. Dean says of a meeting which included only three other people besides himself,

10. JC:83

D: So, I let, I let it be known, I said "You all pack that stuff up and get it the hell out of here 'cause we just, you just can't talk this way in this office and you shouldn't, you should re-examine your whole thinking."

Clearly, the only people Dean let it be known to were the three in the meeting with him. But because it was a general thing he can use a General-Agent Passive.

5.3.1.3 The Corporate-Agent Passive

In a Corporate-Agent use of the passive only one occurrence of the action of the predicate is implied, as with the Agent-Irrelevant Passive, but a group of people is involved, as in the General-Agent

Passive; but they are not each acting individually, as in the General-Agent Passive, but rather as a group.

11. JC:89f.

D: All right, then they [Hunt, Liddy and the Cubans] started making demands. "We've got to have attorneys' fees. Uh, we don't have any money ourselves, and if-- you are asking us to take this through the election." All right, so arrangements were made through Mitchell, uh, initiating it, in discussions that-- I was present...

Arrangements to pay the blackmailers were made by a group, headed by Mitchell. It would be difficult to place a name on this group and so one way around mentioning it is to use a passive. If the identity of the group is important, then a Representor can be chosen to stand for the whole group. Another example is found in 12, part of an example we have seen before in Chapter 2 (example 17 on page 54):

12. JC:4

D: The resources that have been put against this whole investigation to date are really incredible. It's truly a, it's truly a larger investigation than was conducted against, uh, the after inquiry of the JFK assassination.

In each case, a group conducted the investigation.

5.3.1.4 The Situation-Agent Passive

In a Situation-Agent Passive, as the name implies, the most agentive element in the frame is not prototypically agentive, being not a basic-level object, let alone a human being, but a whole scene. The passage in 13 contains an example:

13. JC:95

D: The, uh, I when I say this is a, a growing cancer, uh, I say

it for reasons like this. Bud Krogh, in his testimony before the Grand Jury, was forced to perjure himself.

There was no individual agent holding Krogh down till he perjured himself. There was a situation which was such that Krogh had no choice but to perjure himself. The situation, then, has the responsibility for the occurrence of the event in the predicate, and in this way it is the most agentive element. I will call such a situation a causing situation. Such situations are rarely made subject: they are of themselves not agentive enough. It is not accidental, I believe, that such situations are often hard to put into words economically.

Psychological verbs are often of this type. Example 14 contains two Situation-Agent Passives, the second of which is a psychological passive:

14. JC:61
D: Pat [Gray] has already gotten himself, himself, in a situation where he's got this Mark Felt as his number two man. These other people are surrounding him. [...] Gray's already been locked into, to major personnel decisions. I wouldn't be surprised to see [unintelligible] occur if they say that they cannot go forward with Gray's hearings because of the Watergate.

No one person has locked Gray into major personnel decisions, but rather force of circumstance did. It seems the primary occasion that one can use a psychological verb in the active is when the causing situation is mentioned immediately before. A near-perfect example of the contrast is the following:

15. JC:33
P: You know, we, we talk about Johnson using the FBI. Did your friends tell you, did your friends tell you whether-- what Bobby did, or whether he [unintelligible]?

D: I, I haven't heard but I wouldn't--
P: Johnson believes that Bobby bugged him.
D: That wouldn't surprise me, uh--

If one can be permitted to surmise that Dean was going to say "I wouldn't be surprised" before the President interrupted him[7], then this is an occasion where before the causing situation is mentioned Dean is ready to use a psychological predicate in the passive, and after the mention of the causing situation he turns it around and uses it in the active. Most psychological predicates are in the passive form, but here is another one in the active form, and again the causing situation immediately precedes the clause containing the psychological predicate:

16. JC:11

D: I learned today, incidentally, that, that, uh, I haven't confirmed this because it's-- came from the GO, GAO auditor, investigator who's down here, that he is down here at the Speaker of the House's request, which surprised me.

5.3.1.5 The Expediency Passive

It is interesting that frequently when the President talks about doing something illegal, or even about someone else allegedly doing something illegal, he launches into an agentless passive. In the following passage he changes from the active to passive when he starts talking about doing something illegal, even though the agent is the same in both cases.

17. JC:116

P: Your feeling is that we just can't continue to, to pay the blackmail of these guys?
D: I think that's our greatest jeopardy.
H: Yeah..
P: Now, let me tell you, it's
D: 'Cause that is--

P: no problem, we could, we could get the money. There is no problem in that. We can't provide the clemency. The money can be provided. Mitchell could provide the way to deliver it. That could be done. See what I mean?

Earlier, talking about these same blackmailers, the following interchange occurs, with three such passives:

18. JC:94

P: You, on the money, if you need the money, I mean, uh, you could get the money. Let's say--

D: Well, I think that we're going--

P: What I meant is, you could, you could get a million dollars. And you could get it in cash. I, I know where it could be gotten.

D: Uh huh.

P: I mean it's not easy, but it could be done. But, uh, the question is who the hell would handle it?

D: That's right. Uh--

P: Any ideas on that?

D: Well, I would think that would be something that Mitchell ought to be charged with.

This use of the Expediency Passive seems to be a way of camouflaging the perpetrator's culpability in the event, perhaps by reducing the assertion of the agent's responsibility. The possibility is left open, since situation agents, corporate agents and general agents are often -- perhaps most often -- couched in passive sentences, that the agent in this case is also not exactly the actual agent, but a group or situation including the actual agent, where the actual agent perhaps does not have as much responsibility. Yet in these cases the true agent is usually quite easily recoverable from the context.

In the following example, the possibility is left open that the causation may have been indirect, due to the force of circumstances or one's superiors, or even accidental:

19. NSFM:46f.

The strange thing is, while my father was organizing [people into trade unions], my uncle's group [the syndicate] was actually fighting him. Yet they liked each other as brothers. When my father tried organizing the longshoremen, some young man was killed. He was thirty-three years old and buried alive, and I guess everybody knew it.

Compare the active counterpart of the last two sentences:

20. ...some members of the syndicate killed a young man. He was thirty-three years old and they buried him alive...

If the two passive clauses in 19 had been active, as in 20, the act would have seemed much more heinous. For one thing, one has to be specific about the precise agent in an active sentence, as in the first clause of 20. When the sentence is passive, one doesn't need to commit oneself, and though the general identity of the agent may be clear, the specific identity is obscured. More importantly, mentioning the agent in subject position, without any qualifying additions to the sentence, tends to imply the prototypical agent-action-patient situation as laid out in Chapter 4, with direct agentivity, intentionality, volition, control and responsibility imputed to the agent. The passive form, being a marked construction, marks a deviation from the prototype and so one of the marks of a prototypical agent or topic -- maybe that of responsibility on the part of the agent -- is asserted not to hold[8].

Jespersen (1924:168; see page 221 above) suggested that the self-referring passives of scholarly writing are also of this type of expediency passive. His example was the following:

21. Enough has been said here of a subject which will be treated more fully in a subsequent chapter.

This use is related to the Agent-Irrelevant Passive in that it works via the a tacit invocation of the Agent-Irrelevant Passive: by not mentioning the agent, the speaker or writer implies that what is important is the resultant state and not who did it. To say that the passive is no longer used that way as much, since 22 is now perfectly acceptable in most scholarly writing,

22. I will discuss this subject in greater detail in chapter 7.

is a comment that bears not so much on changes in the uses of the passive as changes in the public conscience on what is polite and impolite, appropriate and inappropriate.

5.3.1.6 The Patient-Effect Passive

Although the final result is the same, sometimes the passive is used more to move the patient into a more prominent position than to move the agent out of it. This is the Patient-Effect Passive. The following passage contains an example of a Patient-Effect Passive:

23. JC:30

P: Now, on the other thing, that is, to recap: [...] You must talk to Kleindienst, fast, so that Kleindienst knows that it's been decided, and that's it.

Since the agent is the President, the agent is not irrelevant. But what is important is the effect on the patient: the result. Another example:

24. JC:31

P: Go on to the written interrogatory thing. [The President wanted the policy to be that White House Staff members would submit written interrogatories to the Grand Jury rather than

being interrogated in person.] Your, your view would be not to give any further ground on that?

D: I'd say hold-- You know, you, you, you initially hold the line as far as you go if it becomes apparent that it's necessary for informational purposes. [...] I mean, the President, the President's not going to hide any information. [...] Then this can be given in a sworn statement, uh, through, uh, an interrogatory -- send your questions down, they'll be answered. We won't hide the information.

Again, the agent is quite clear from context and clearly not irrelevant. But in this case the important thing is the result on the information requested by the Grand Jury, and the questions submitted: they are answered: this is, at least, what the speakers want to convey to the Grand Jury.

5.3.2 The Patient-Effect Passive in Derivative Constructions

In most derivative constructions an agentless passive is usually a Patient-Effect Passive. This is because the passive in these constructions is usually a final-state passive, and final-state passives are usually Patient-Effect Passives.

5.3.2.1 Final-State Passives

Passives that focus on the final state of a process are generally Patient-Effect Passives, since by the point of the final state the method of arriving at that final state is less important than the fact of the final state.

25. JC:50

D: It's my estimation, for what it's worth, that probably this week will draw more Watergate questions than any other week you're likely to see, uh, given the Gray hearings, the new

revelations about-- they're not new, but they're now substantiated -- about Kalmbach and Chapin that have been in the press.

26. JC:105

D: ...Let me say something interesting about that. Within the files--

P: Oh, I saw that. The picture.

D: Yeah, the picture. That, see, that's not all that buried.

5.3.2.2 Past-Participial Complements

After get, want, keep, have, hear and the like, the past participle is usually a derivative of the Patient-Effect Passive, since, again, the passive is usually a final-state passive. This is shown in the following five examples:

27. JC:29 GET

D: You know, we've got fourteen million dollars worth of suits against us, and we've got seven or s--, or ten against them.

P: Christ, they all ought to get together and drop them.

D: That's what we're trying to get accomplished.

28. JC:120 WANT

P: I want everybody in the White House called.

29. JC:16 KEEP

P: Right, just [...] tell Ehrlichman to get Brown in and Ford in and then they can all work out something. But, they ought to get off their asses and push it. No use to let Patman have a free ride here.

D: Well, we can, we can keep them well briefed on moves if they'll, if they'll move when we provide them with the, the strategy.

30. JC:202 HEAR

P: I could have told you to go to Camp David and concoct a story, couldn't I?

D: That's right.

P: And you've never heard that said, have you?

D: No, sir.

31. JC:55,59 HAVE

D: [page 55] Also, it's going to tarnish quite severely, uh--

P: Some of the FBI.

D: Some of the FBI. And a former President.

P: Fine.

[...]

P: [page 59] Let's look at the distant future. Uh, look at the-- How bad would it hurt the country, John, to have the FBI so terribly discredited? [unintelligible]

In each of these five cases the agent is not necessarily irrelevant, but what is more important is the effect of the action on the patient. In 27, the agent of accomplished is the same as the subject of try: we. But the important thing is the patient of accomplished: that. In 28, the important thing is that everybody is informed rather than the identity of the person(s) who do(es) the calling. In 29, the important thing is the resultant state of Brown and Ford: well briefed. In 30, the agent of said is clearly the President. But the important thing is that the patient that, that is, the President telling Dean to go and "concoct a story," in effect, does not exist: the President has never said it. The situation with have, as in 31, is much more complicated than one example can illustrate. But in this example, again, the identity of the agent is known and fairly important: Bill Sullivan. But the important thing is the effect of the discrediting on the FBI.

5.3.2.3 Existential Sentences

When a passive is embedded in an existential sentence, the result is often a Patient-Effect Passive:

32. JC:3

D: The second bug. There was another bug found in the phone of, uh, the first--

33. JC:104

D: You know, the Watergate Hearings just over, Hunt now demanding clemency or he is going to blow. [...] It may further involve you in a way you shouldn't be involved in

this.

P: No it's wrong; that's for sure.

D: Well, whatever-- you know I-- there've been some bad judgments made. There've been some necessary judgments made.

As we saw in Chapter 3.1, the point of an existential sentence is to assert the existence of something, something which can be presupposed if the entity does not have the focus of attention. So the logical reason for using an agentless passive with an existential is the Patient-Effect use.

5.3.2.4 Attributives

Past participles used attributively are generally derivatives of Patient-Effect Passives. This is closely related to the previous observation, since past participles used attributively are generally final-state passives as well:

- 34. JC:4 a custom-made product
- JC:24 hard earned cash
- JC:24 an amended complaint

5.3.2.5 GET-Passives

With get-passives the reason is also usually to spotlight the effect on the patient:

- 35. JC:123
- H: That's what I mean; that's the trouble: We are so god damned square that we'd get caught [laundering money to pay the blackmailers].
- 36. JC:136
- D: All right, is that, is that better? Or is it better to have, you know, just, just keep going and have the thing build up

and all of a sudden collapse? And, and people get indicted and people, uh, get tarnished.

That get-passives tend to focus on their effect on the patient rather than on the work of the agent was also pointed out by Robin Lakoff (1971), who gives the following minimal pairs:

- 37a. Radicals must get arrested to prove their machismo.
- b. ?Radicals must be arrested to prove their machismo.
- 38a. Radicals must be arrested if we are to keep the Commies from overrunning the U.S.
- b. ?Radicals must get arrested if we are to keep the Commies from overrunning the U.S.
- 39a. Mary was shot on purpose, (the bastards!)
- b. Mary got shot on purpose, (*the bastards!)

In 37 and 38 (Lakoff's 18, page 156), when the reason after the passive clause relates to the surface subject (the patient), get is the appropriate auxiliary; when the reason after the passive clause relates to the unexpressed agent, be is the appropriate auxiliary. In 39 (Lakoff's 19a,b, 20a,b, page 156), when the auxiliary is got, on purpose refers to the surface subject's (the patient's) intentions, as shown by the unacceptability of the epithet the bastards after the sentence; when the auxiliary is was, on purpose relates to the unexpressed agents' intentions, as shown by the acceptability of the epithet the bastards after the sentence.

5.4 Agented Agentive Passives

In this section we will see more examples of the different types of agented agentive passives. Several of these types, as we will see,

resemble closely the uses of the agentless passive. At the end of this section we will thus consider why it is sometimes thought necessary to include an agent by-phrase in the passive sentence.

The uses of the agented agentive passive that were outlined in Section 1 of this chapter were as follows:

1. The identity of the object of the by-phrase is of transitory interest in the discourse: The Transitory-Agent Passive.
2. The patient is the focus of attention: The Focus-of-Attention Passive.
3. The object of the by-phrase would be understood too agentively if subject of an active sentence: The Less-Agentive Passive.
4. The object of the by-phrase has less responsibility, specifically blame, than would be asserted if it were subject of an active sentence: The Irresponsibility Passive.
5. The object of the by-phrase is new, and is to be the new sentence topic: The New-Topic Passive.
6. The object of the by-phrase is emphasized, for reasons of contrast, outrage, etc.: The Emphatic-Agent Passive.

As I mentioned in Section 1, the first three of these uses are major uses, in that they occur very commonly in my corpus. The last three of these uses are minor uses, in that they do not occur very frequently. Yet they are instructive about the nature of the passive subject. In the following subsection I will consider the three major uses of the agented passive; in the next one I consider the three minor uses; and in the last one I discuss why speakers consider it necessary to include an agent by-phrase in an agented-passive sentence.

5.4.1 Major Uses of the Agented Agentive Passive

In this subsection I will consider each of the major uses of the agentive passive, the Transitory-Agent Passive, the Focus-of-Attention Passive, and the Less-Agentive Passive, in turn.

5.4.1.1 The Transitory-Agent Passive

In the following, the object of the by-phrase is mentioned only in that phrase and never again:

1. NSFM:220
My mother [...] was born in Birmingham, England [...] and my father [...] is a native Missourian, but his grandparents were British, and I think his parents were born there.
Before I went to school I was more into the British tradition. I think you're affected by the kids around you a lot. But when I was real small, I had a British accent.

The only reason that the kids around you is mentioned at all is to explain the speaker's being less into the British tradition after she went to school. They never come up again. They are not the topic of the passage or of the sentence even though they are the most agentive element. This occurrence of the Transitory-Agent Passive is especially appropriate because it also removes an indefinite, nonreferential noun phrase from subject position. It is not coincidental that the object of the by-phrase is neither topic nor referential/definite: topics are almost always both referential and definite.

Another example is found in 2:

2. NSFM:250
Maybe I'm optimistic, but I think things are changing right now for women and it's going to get better. They're allowed to go into different fields now that were mostly dominated by men before, like carpentry, engineering, auto factories, that type of thing. And they have more of a sense of themselves and because of that, they're letting themselves be known in different kinds of groups. They're speaking out in different ways.

The mention of men is only to bring up the different fields like carpentry, etc. The pronoun they continues to refer to the focus of attention, women.

In the following, Hunt is the focus of attention and O'Brien is of peripheral interest, and in fact does not get mentioned again in this context after this passage, whereas Hunt does:

3. JC:115
 D: Hunt, Hunt is now talking in terms of being out by Christmas.
 H: This year?
 D: This year. Uh, he was told by O'Brien, who is my conveyer of doom back and forth,
 H: Yeah.
 D: uh, that, uh, hell he'd be lucky if he were out a year from now, after the Ervin hearings were, uh, you know, over.
 (a) He said, "How in the Lord's name could you be commuted that quickly?"
 (b) He said, "Well, that's my commitment from Colson."

The use of pronouns is instructive in this passage: He after (a) refers to O'Brien, which is a possible reference because he is the most recent entity mentioned. He after (b) refers to Hunt, and this is possible because Hunt has remained the focus of attention.

5.4.1.2 The Focus-of-Attention Passive

This is the flip-side of the Transitory-Agent Passive, except that in the Focus-of-Attention Passive the agent may stick around for longer. In the stretch of discourse that the following passage comes from, the object of the by-phrase comes up periodically as something the speaker is in conflict with and reacting against. But the speaker herself, referred to by I, remains the focus of attention:

4. NSFM:66

What I had in mind was developing programs for the Italians but I didn't want to say that right way because Italians didn't know anything about programs. What they had in mind was uniting. They felt where there's unity, there's strength [...]
 [next paragraph:] At the beginning I went along with it, because I knew I needed a group behind me or I would not be recognized by the city. But while they were talking about uniting, I was thinking about doing something for the poor people.

Even though the city is a recurring participant in the discourse, its tangentiality is shown by the fact that they in the very next sentence does not refer to the city or the city administration but to the speaker's Italian constituency which was mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The agented passive is in the last paragraph of the following passage, which is quoted at length because by seeing the entire passage it is possible to see how the syntax of the passage imitates the meaning by an artful use of a Focus-of-Attention Passive.

5. NSFM:126

The Combined Jewish Philanthropies ... can organize rallies for Soviet Jewry or Israel, but they couldn't do it to protest blockbusting in the largest Jewish community.

Finally, through pressure, they decided to do something and I'll tell you how it happened. A man came over to me at a meeting several years ago and he had a stack of index cards four inches thick. ...

So this man with the cards says to me, "Hey, Janice, I want to show you something." He said, "Look, we support these agencies. Without us, they can't survive. We're going to call these people up and we're going to tell them that when they come campaigning for the money this year not to give to the CJP, but to give to the Israel Relief Fund."

Each person got about twenty cards to call and then each one that got called, called a friend, and the friend called a friend. And when the CJP started their campaign, they were told by these people that they were going to contribute directly to the Israel Relief Fund and they got a little

panicky. It started in 1969 and for two years their funds went way down and they had to cut their budget. The people simply said unless you help Dorchester and Mattapan they won't contribute to the CJP any more.

In this passage there is a conflict between the Combined Jewish Philanthropies and the residents of Dorchester-Mattapan, a neighborhood of Boston that was originally largely Jewish, because the CJP is not helping them fight the blockbusting that is going on in their neighborhood. The syntax of the paragraph containing the passive imitates the meaning because just as the conflict has two sides, there are two (alternating) foci of attention. The focus of attention is alternately on the residents, referred to by these people, and the CJP, and the syntax is adjusted accordingly. Just before the agented passive in the last paragraph the focus is on the people, telephoning others to not support the CJP. Then in the sentence in question the focus is on the CJP. Later, in the last sentence in the quoted passage, the focus is on the people again: the people have the last word -- and that is the force of the passage.

Sometimes the Focus-of-Attention Passive brings back a participant that had been mentioned previously in the by-phrase, rounding off a section of discourse. An example has already been given in 28 on page 225. Another example is found in 6:

6. NSFM:112
 I'll tell you something. Kids reflect what their parents are. [...] As I said, it wasn't the northern blacks. Here we had a bunch of low-class people and there's low-class in every religion and race and every ethnic group, I don't care who you are. [...] [new paragraph:] You have a group of people that were persecuted for four hundred years. Now I'm so sick of hearing about that that I feel like throwing up. Say listen,

there isn't one religion or ethnic group that hasn't gone through persecution at one time or another. Especially the Jews [...]
[new paragraph:] In my family, we had many relatives that were killed in the concentration camps. If I spent the rest of my life hating every German and telling them they're no goddamned good and I don't trust any of them, and I keep looking back to the past, then I have no future. I have to look toward the future and try to better things so that this will never happen again. So I'm tired of being blamed by the blacks. First of all, my grandparents weren't even born here and they had nothing to do with their persecution! [end of paragraph]

The boldface sentence summarizes the previous three paragraphs. The agent in the by-phrase, again indefinite and nonreferential and therefore appropriately in the by-phrase, is also the Representor of the schema against which the speaker is reacting.

5.4.1.3 The Less-Agentive Passive

There are many agented passives where the so-called agent, or the object of the by-phrase, is not a prototypical agent. Most frequently the "agent" in this Less-Agentive Passive is inanimate and thus has no intentionality or volition concerning the action or event of the predicate; but it has the primary responsibility for and is the immediate cause of the occurrence of the action of the predicate. I will call this entity the "causer" in this section. In the agented passive, this "causer" occurs as the object of a by-phrase. In addition, the patient in such a sentence -- the passive subject -- is animate. There is an important subclass of this type of Less-Agentive passive in which the verb is a psychological verb. In addition, there is a subclass of Less-Agentive passives in which the object of the by-phrase is a corporate entity. Though the individuals that make up the corporate

entity may be human, the corporate entity itself is less prototypically agentive than any one individual might be. Later we will see examples of a corporate object of a by-phrase and of a Less-Agentive Passive where the verb is a psychological verb. An example where the object of the by-phrase is inanimate is found at the end of 7; compare the active equivalent of the agented passive in 8:

7. JC:130

H: John [Dean]'s point is exactly right, that the erosion here now is going to you [the President], and that is the thing that we've got to turn off, at whatever the cost.
[...]

P: Well, the erosion is inevitably going to come here, apart from anything, you know, people saying that, uh, well, the Watergate isn't a major concern. It isn't. But it would, but it will be. It's bound to be.

D: We cannot let you be tarnished by that situation.

8. We cannot let that situation tarnish you.

In this case that situation represents a discourse topic, the Watergate scandal, while you refers to the President as a metonymy for his reputation, and as such refers to a Representor of several discourse topics: Watergate, the government, and the White House. Both elements are therefore topical. However, the active form makes the inanimate entity sound perhaps too agentive, and the speaker ends up preferring the agented passive form. Note also that the passive subject is human whereas the object of the by-phrase is not. We will return to that issue when we have looked at examples of the other types of Less-Agentive Passive.

When the head of a relative clause is human and not corporate and the agent of the verb in the relative clause is not a prototypical

agent, speakers in NSFM quite consistently prefer the passive form in the relative clause. An example is found in 9:

9. NSFM:281

Judy chose me to represent all present employees who are not covered by the decree, the way she interprets it, because I don't have the five years' seniority that would entitle me to back pay, since I had left for a while when I had my first two kids.

The narrative that this sentence is taken from is about the conditions for women, as experienced by the speaker, at a U.S. Steel plant outside Chicago. The discussion arose because of a consent decree, signed the previous May (1974) by the United Steel Workers of America, nine major steel companies, and the U.S. Departments of Justice and Labor and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), to bring employment practices in the steel industry into compliance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. In the passive clause, the decree is the (nonprototypical) agent, the causer, of the verb cover, but is mentioned as the object of a passive by-phrase even though it has been mentioned several times in the preceding passage and is one of the major participants in the narrative. Within the context of the relative clause, however, the present employees are more prominent than the decree, since present employees is the head of the relative clause; and since the present employees are also more animate than the decree, present employees is considered a better subject for the relative clause than the decree.

It must be noted that it is not enough in English for an argument in a relative clause to be coreferential with the head for it to be made

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subject. That would mean that there would never be an entity other than the subject of a relative clause coreferential with the head. The fact is that when the referent of the head of the relative clause is not more animate than the causer (prototypical or nonprototypical agent) of the action of the verb of the relative clause, then the relative clause is not generally passivized. This means that the relative animacy of the referents of the arguments in the relative clause is a crucial factor. In the examples in 10 and 11, the head is coreferential with an argument other than the subject of the relative clause, and the subject is more animate than the coreferential element. Both of these examples come from the same passage as 9 above:

10. NSFM:280
NOW wants to expand to the mills around here that are interested and any other unions that feel they have problems that we could help them with.
11. NSFM:280
But he never intended for us to go into the EEOC and file a class action suit, which we did.

My data is not extensive enough to allow for unalterable conclusions, and there are exceptions, but certainly the trend seems to be as follows: the crucial factor determining whether a relative clause is passivized or not (in those cases where it can be passivized) is the relative animacy of the referents of the arguments of the verb in the relative clause: if the head is more animate than the agent, the sentence is passivized.

Going back to 9, since the decree has been mentioned several times before the relevant agented passive sentence, and is in fact a major

participant in the passage in which this passive clause is found, this is not a case of the Transitory-Agent Passive. It is also not a case of the Focus-of-Attention Passive, since the decree is more prominent, and is spoken of much more frequently, than the present employees, the subject of the agented passive clause, as a group, who are only mentioned here. The other three types of agented passives are the Irresponsibility Passive, the New-Topic Passive, and the Emphatic-Agent Passive, and again the occurrence of the agented passive here is not one of those. In a sense, the less-agentive agent, the causer, is less responsible because it does not have intentionality, but what is crucial about the Irresponsibility Passives, as we will see, is that the agent has less blame imputed to it when it is object of the by-phrase than when it is subject of an active sentence. This is not the case with the passive in 9, and so I conclude that it is indeed a Less-Agentive Passive.

In other cases of the Less-Agentive Passive, the referent of the object of the by-phrase is a corporate entity, which is as such less agentive than an individual entity; corporate entities seem to frequently occur as objects of a passive by-phrase rather than as subject. Examples are found in 12 and 13. In 12 the corporate entity is "the Y," and in 13 the corporate entity is "management":

12a. NSFM:204f.

Before I got involved with the health committee at the Southwest Y, I really didn't know much about what was going on there. One of my friends called me one day and she said, "We're having a program-planning meeting and I'd like you to go." [...]
[next paragraph:] So I went over there and there was a crowd of about twenty women sitting around in a circle in this

small room. They started at the door and asked everybody what they would like to see done by the Y and it ran the gamut from a softball team to reducing classes to crochet lessons.

- b. They ... asked everybody what they would like to see the Y do/doing.

13a. NSFM:235

A lot of people are very unhappy about all this and the union is the only place to turn right now. Chances are, if you go to management on your own, you're going to get shot down.

[...]

[next paragraph:] They elected me chairperson of the reclass committee. It was an honor, but I didn't realize what I was getting into. It's a lot bigger thing than I first realized. I've really tried to put a lot of time into it and study all the classifications and the changes that were proposed by management and get around to all these different worksites.

- b. I've really tried to put a lot of time into it and study all the classifications and the changes that management proposed and get around to all these different worksites.

Although the (b) sentence in each case sounds acceptable, more often than not speakers prefer to put corporate entities into a by-phrase if at all possible. When entities like "the Y," "management," or "the Church" occur in subject position in my corpus, the chance is very good that there is no passive alternative.

Many Less-Agentive Passives occur with psychological verbs: fully half of the examples in my corpus (11 out of 21) are of this type. I have mentioned before (page 237) that the primary situation where an active psychological verb is consistently used is that in which the causing situation is mentioned immediately before. In all other cases, these psychological verbs occur in the passive when the causer is inanimate. An example is found in 14:

14a. JC:164

- P: Uh, now you [Dean and Ehrlichman] were the two who felt the strongest, uh, on the executive privilege thing. [...] Have

you changed your mind now?

D: No, sir. I think it's a, I think it's a terrific statement. It's -- It, it puts you just where you should be. [...]

E: And, as I told him [John Mitchell], I am, am so convinced we're right on the statement that I have never gone beyond that. He argues that we're being hurt badly by the way it's being handled. And I am willing--let's see--

- b. He argues that the way it's being handled is hurting us badly.

The active form in 14b is grammatical but the speaker prefers the passive form in 14a[9]. Psychological predicates are different from most other predicates in that the argument in the frame that refers to the less agentive entity is, in sentences with psychological predicates, usually higher up on the animacy scale than the more agentive entity. While the most agentive entity is typically inanimate rather than animate, and therefore a causer rather than a true agent, the less agentive entity is usually a human, and an experiencer rather than a patient. This is the reason that sentences containing a psychological verb are so frequently passivized: to get the entity higher on the animacy scale in subject position. Certainly it is not the case in these passive sentences that the most agentive element, or causer, is new information and therefore might be thought to fit better at the end of the sentence. Many of these causers in the by-phrase are pronominalized, showing that they are patently not new information. The causer in the by-phrase often refers, in fact, to a discourse topic. The fact that such sentences are frequently passivized is a consequence of the fact that people are more interested in people than in the situations people find themselves in, except as the situations relate to the people. The example in 15 is instructive in this respect:

15a. JC:95

D: The, uh, I, when I say this is a, a growing cancer, uh, I say it for reasons like this. Bud Krogh, in his testimony before the Grand Jury, was forced to perjure himself. Uh, he is haunted by it. Uh, Bud said, "I haven't had a pleasant day on the job."

b. It haunts him.

Bud Krogh is the Representor of the scene of his perjury, and the locus of the perspective from which the event is viewed. On the other hand, it refers to a discourse topic, the scene of his perjury itself. In fact, to continue speaking about Bud Krogh, as Dean does in the last sentence of the above passage, is to go on a tangent: the scene referred to by it is the main point of the discussion. Later, the President will bring the conversation back to this scene and away from the tangent which Dean has launched them onto:

16. JC:95 (continuation of 15)

P: Huh? Said what?

D: He said, "I have not had a pleasant day on my job." Uh, he talked, apparently, he said to me, "I told my wife all about this," he said. "The, uh, the curtain may ring down one of these days, and, uh, I may have to face the music, which I'm perfectly willing to do." Uh--

P: What did he perjure himself on, John?

The President interrupts Dean's reminiscences about Bud Krogh by bringing the conversation back to the perjury scene with the question in boldface.

The passive in 17 is another example in which the object of the by-phrase is a pronoun, it:

17. JC:101

D: Bob will be accused of things he has never heard of

P: Yeah.

D: and then he'll have to disprove it, and it'll just get nasty

and it'll be a
P: Yeah.
D: real, uh,
P: Yeah.
D: real bad situation. And the person who will be hurt by it
most will be you and
P: Of course.
D: the Presidency, and I just don't think--

The prevalence of pronouns in the by-phrase of this type of agented passive is remarkable in that generally by-phrases never have a pronoun. With psychological verbs, however, it seems to be quite general: psychological verbs passivize based on the relative animacy of the referents of the arguments -- the most animate becomes the subject -- and so the relevance or irrelevance of the identity of the causer to the progress of the discourse is of secondary importance in the decision to passivize or not to passivize.

The following passage illustrates the fact that psychological verbs are special in that they passivize more readily than other verbs. In 18, the schema referred to by it, a schema in which a woman is "more of an individual, more of a person," is the causer for two verbs, threaten and help (four times, plus once embedded under can and do). Although this schema is not by any means a prototypical agent for these verbs, since it does not have the intention of bringing the action of the predicate about and is not human, nevertheless, it is the most agentive in that it is the immediate cause of the action of the predicate and has primary responsibility for it. This is true both in the case of help and in the case of threaten. But the passive is only used with threaten and not with help:

18. NSFM:289

I really do believe that when you're more of an individual, more of a person, it can only help a marriage. It sure has helped mine. I think that unless a man is threatened by it, and then he has problems, it can't do anything but help. And if it can help marriages, it can help the whole country, the whole society.

The reason is not far to seek: in the case of the psychological verb threaten, the most agentive argument of the verb is lower on the animacy scale than the other argument. This is not the case with the non-psychological verb help, where both arguments refer to inanimate entities.

The common factor in all these uses of the Less-Agentive Passive -- those with psychological verbs, those with corporate agents, and those simply with an inanimate "causer" and an animate patient -- is that the hierarchy of syntactic relations does not line up with the animacy hierarchy in the usual way in the corresponding active. In other words, in these cases the subject of the corresponding active sentence would be of lower animacy than the direct object. In order to avoid this, the passive is used.

5.4.2 Minor Uses of the Agented Agentive Passive

The above three uses of the agented passive, the Transitory-Agent Passive, the Focus-of-Attention Passive, and the Less-Agentive Passive, are the major reasons for using an agented passive, in the sense that most of the agented passives in my corpus occur for one of the above three reasons. The three minor uses of the agented passive which occur in my corpus, however, although not occurring as frequently, are also instructive. The three minor uses are the Irresponsibility Passive, the

New-Agent Passive, and the Emphatic-Agent Passive. As we will see in this subsection, each occurrence of one of these minor uses of the agented passive is a special case of one of the three major uses above. In this subsection I will consider each of these uses of the agented passive in turn.

5.4.2.1 The Irresponsibility Passive

The first of these minor uses is the Irresponsibility Passive. In section 1 of this chapter I presented the following example (page 213):

- 19a. JC:86
D: I called Liddy, uh, on that Monday morning, and I said, "Gordon," I said, "first, I want to know if anybody in the White House was involved in this." And he said, "No, they weren't." I said, "Well, I want to know how in God's name this happened." And he said, "Well, I was pushed without mercy by Magruder to get in there, get more information, that the information, it was not satisfactory."
b. Well, Magruder pushed me without mercy to get in there...

If Dean had said 19b instead of the agented passive in 19a, he would have made Liddy sound as if he were trying to shift the blame for the failed break-in from himself to Magruder. By putting the sentence in the passive and I in subject position, Dean manages to lessen the force of this implication considerably. The Irresponsibility Passive is actually a conventional use of the Transitory-Agent Passive or the Focus-of-Attention Passive: responsibility, and thereby blame, is reduced on the referent of the object of the by-phrase because, by putting it in a by-phrase, the speaker implies that it is of transitory interest, as with the Transitory-Agent Passive, or at least that the subject of the passive sentence is of greater interest, as with the

Focus-of-Attention Passive. To say that the object of the by-phrase is of lesser interest than the subject of the passive sentence is to say that the question of responsibility or blame on the part of the object of the by-phrase is not of interest. So in 19a, Dean is having Liddy say, in effect, "Yes, it is Magruder's fault, but that's not the point right now." If Dean had had Liddy say 19b, he would have seemed to be making a point of the fact that it was Magruder's fault. Note, however, that though Dean is downplaying the implication that Liddy is blaming Magruder for what happened, having Liddy in subject position does not imply that Liddy is to blame for what happened. Instead, the question of blame is eliminated as an issue. We will see evidence of this below.

I must emphasize that I have only seen this phenomenon in the passive with a certain type of responsibility: that of fault or blame. Of every agentive verb we can ask who or what is responsible for the action, but that is different from asking who is what is to blame. Blaming is only one particular kind of imputation of responsibility. This is how this use of the passive differs from the third use, the Less-Agentive Passive, where the object of the by-phrase is inherently less agentive than another argument of the verb, and where the object of the by-phrase is not a true agent but only a "causer."

Another example of the Irresponsibility Passive is found in 20:

20. JC:79

P: Well, what is the Dean summary of the day about?

D: John caught me on the way out and asked me about why Gray was holding back on information, if that was under instructions from us. And it, uh, it was and it wasn't. Uh, it was

instructions proposed by the Attorney General, consistent with your press conference statement that no further raw data was to be turned over to the

P: Full committee.

D: full committee.

P: Right.

21. It was instructions the Attorney General proposed, ...

If Dean had said 21 it would have sounded as if the Attorney General had been acting independently, which, as the previous context makes clear, is not the case. By making the Attorney General the subject, Dean would have seemed to be placing the responsibility on him. In fact he is part of the Administration which was corporately responsible for the instructions. Again, the use of the passive here (embedded under an it-Cleft) is a conventional use of the Transitory-Agent Passive: by putting the Attorney-General in a by-phrase, the speaker implies that the identity of the actual person doing it is only of transitory interest, since the entire Administration was actually corporately responsible for the instructions. Again, reducing the Attorney-General's responsibility does not increase the responsibility of the passive subject, the instructions.

It is not the case, however, that a speaker overtly absolves an agent of all blame or responsibility by passivizing the sentence and mentioning the agent in a by-phrase. Rather, the agent's responsibility is downplayed -- to enable the speaker not to seem to be abdicating the subject's responsibility, as in 19, or because the agent was acting corporately, as in 20. The responsibility still lies with the referent of the object of the by-phrase; the Irresponsibility Passive just enables the speaker not to make an issue of it. An interesting example,

22, from Nobody Speaks for Me! makes this clear. The passage is dividied up for ease of exposition:

22. NSFM:258

- a. I was raised Missouri Synod Lutheran and sent to parochial school from kindergarten through the eighth grade. The atmosphere was extremely strict. It was really a parochial school, right to the letter, and they can have too much of an influence on your life.
- b. Then, of course, certain kids were the best in the class and others were constantly put down.
- c. I always felt put down by those teachers.
- d. It was really traumatic when I moved from that small school, where I had gone to class with the same twenty children and the same three teachers for eight years of school, and moved into a high school where there were hundreds.

23. I always felt put down.

If we compare the agented passive in 22c with its agentless counterpart in 23, we see that the addition of the by-phrase serves to remove some of the responsibility from the passive subject. Sentence 23, without a by-phrase, sounds as if the speaker had a personal problem which brought about severe feelings of inferiority, and the sentence sounds this way even if placed in the context 22b-22d. Sentence 22c makes it clear that the responsibility for this put-down feeling on the part of the speaker must lie with the teachers and not with the speaker herself.

Thus there seems to be a hierarchy of blame and responsibility: the referent of the subject of an active verb is assigned the most blame, then the referent of the object of a by-phrase, then the subject of an agentless passive verb. The Irresponsibility Passive is a conventional use of the Transitory-Agent or the Focus-of-Attention Passive, which works by downplaying the importance of the referent of

the object of the by-phrase in the discourse, thus downplaying also the issue of whether the referent of the object of the by-phrase is to blame for the occurrence of the action of the predicate.

5.4.2.2 The New-Topic Passive

In the Introduction to this chapter, we saw the following example of a New-Topic Passive (page 214):

25. NSFM:314 (spoken by a man)
I was never home as a kid. [...] I was always roaming around. I was born out of wedlock so I was raised by my grandfather, who was very hard with me at times. But he was a strong influence because he was very politically oriented in his own oppressed way.
My grandfather was a crew leader...

In a New-Topic Passive, the object of the by-phrase is new and it becomes the new sentence topic in subsequent text, either temporarily or permanently. In 25, for example, it is clear that the grandfather is new: he was never spoken of before. He becomes the Representor of a new discourse topic, the conditions the speaker's grandfather worked under, an example of the discourse-topic schema of the relations between Chicanos and Anglos in Cotulla, Texas. For two paragraphs after this passage, the speaker describes different ways in which the grandfather was politically oriented in his own oppressed way, to return, via a parenthesis on differences between older people and young people, to another example of the relations between the Chicanos and the Anglos, the one which is of primary interest to the speaker: the story of how the speaker got to where he was at the moment of speaking.

A complex and interesting example is found in 26, which is a single passage, divided up for ease of exposition. In this passage, the boldface passive in 26b is a New-Topic Passive, leading to the Irish as a new discourse topic.

- 26a. NSFM:95
When we first moved to Morton Street it was a very mixed area. At school it was about 40% Jewish and 60% non-Jewish. And there were fights.
- b. When the kids came out of Hebrew school they were beaten up by the Irish.
 - c. Way back there was an Irish builder who bought a lot of property in Mattapan and brought in the first Irish families.
 - d. They were looked down on by the Protestants something terrible because of the umpteen children.
 - e. Then the Protestants and the Catholics looked down on the Jews when they moved in after the Chelsea fire in 1907.

That the Irish are the Representor of the new discourse topic is shown by the fact that the referent of the pronoun they in 26d is understood to be the Irish rather than the Jews. Sentence 26d itself also contains a New-Topic Passive, bringing in the Protestants. The Protestants, however, do not become the new discourse topic by themselves but have to share the spotlight with the Irish, as is shown by the subject of 26e. This passage shows that the switch to a new topic via a New-Topic Passive does not have to be permanent.

Sentences where the agent by-phrase marks a new topic are among those called "Janus sentences" by Livia Polanyi (personal communication), so-called because as far as the progress of the topic in the discourse is concerned this type of sentence looks both ways: the beginning is formulated according to an old topic but the end of the sentence heralds a new topic. This new topic may be a temporary

digression or a permanent turning away from the old topic. The term "Janus sentence" is not restricted to agented passives: any sentence in which the beginning is formulated according to the old topic and the end heralds a new topic would be called a "Janus sentence" by Polanyi. Another good place to introduce a new topic is, for example, via a direct object or via the object of a prepositional phrase. Sentence 26e above is an example of a Janus sentence where the new topic is couched in a prepositional phrase. I repeat it here with its continuation:

- 26e. Then the Protestants and the Catholics looked down on the
Jews when they moved in after the Chelsea fire in 1907.
- f. They had no place to go so they started to migrate slowly
into Dorchester and Mattapan.

That the Jews are the new (actually resumed) sentence topic is shown by the fact that the referent of they in 26f is understood to be the Jews rather than the Protestants and the Catholics. These Janus sentences, then, serve to introduce new topics just as presentatives and existentials serve to do so, and provide an explicit link for the new topic with what has gone before.

The New-Topic Passive is a special case of the Focus-of-Attention Passive. Even though later the referent of the object of the by-phrase becomes the sentence topic, at the point at which the Janus sentence is spoken it is not yet the (sentence) topic. Lambrecht (1982) does not call a new topic a topic; in fact, he specifically says it is not one. This receives corroboration from a common-sense asking what each sentence in, for example, 25 above is about. If one were to ask this about the sentence after the boldface sentence, for example, the answer

would be "speaker's grandfather," but if one were to ask this of the boldface sentence itself, the answer would not be "speaker's grandfather" but rather "speaker" or perhaps "how speaker was raised." This implies that the Janus sentence itself has the original topic as topic, and only introduces the new topic, corroborating Lambrecht's position. In a New-Topic Passive, then, the passive subject is more the focus of attention than the object of the by-phrase, even though that changes immediately afterward.

When the agent by-phrase marks a new topic it receives stress. This can be seen in the three New-Topic Passives in 25-26 above. This requirement, in fact, makes the first clause in 26d unusual in that it receives two stress peaks because two elements in the sentence deserve one: something terrible because it is the last clause-stressable element in the sentence and therefore receives the clause stress, and besides, it is (somewhat) emphatic; and the Protestants because it marks a new topic. If the Protestants did not receive stress then it would seem as if they had been mentioned before, which is not the case.

However, not all agent by-phrases that receive stress occur in New-Topic Passives. Clause stress has to go somewhere, and sometimes an agent by-phrase receives stress because it marks a new topic, and sometimes it gets it simply because it is the last (clause-stressable) element in the sentence. Examples of agent by-phrases of this latter type that we have already seen are 27, from page 212, and 28, from page 250:

27. NSFM:150

But when my mother died in '65, my father came around to me and we've been the best of friends ever since. He really needed me when my brother died last year. It hurt him so bad. My brother got hit by a car and he died from a blood clot in his leg.

28. NSFM:66

What I had in mind was developing programs for the Italians but I didn't want to say that right way because Italians didn't know anything about programs. What they had in mind was uniting. They felt where there's unity, there's strength [...]
[next paragraph:] At the beginning I went along with it, because I knew I need a group behind me or I would not be recognized by the city. But while they were talking about uniting, I was thinking about doing something for the poor people.

There does not seem to be any difference in the level of stress depending on whether the by-phrase receives normal clausal stress, as in 27 and 28, or marks a new topic, as in 25 and 26b,d. If the New-Topic Passive occurs at the end of a speaker's "turn," this can lead to the next interlocutor's taking the object of the by-phrase as the new topic whereas the previous interlocutor had meant the referent merely as an ancillary participant in the discourse. In the following, for example, it is not at all clear whether Dean meant the object of the by-phrase, the leadership, to be a new topic, but the President takes it as such.

29. JC:61

- D: I wouldn't be surprised to see [unintelligible] occur if they say that they cannot go forward with Gray's [confirmation] hearings [to be confirmed as the new head of the FBI] because of the Watergate.
- P: Where would that be done, John, at what point in the Committee or on the Floor or both?
- D: It could happen. It would certainly be voted on first in the uh, uh, in the Committee, in the Judiciary Committee.
- P: [unintelligible]
- D: The question is, then, whether, uh, it'll be put in the calendar by the leadership [of the Judiciary Committee]. I assume that that's--
- P: The leadership might determine that we will not put it on the calendar until after the Watergate hearings.

The President picks up on the leadership as a new sentence topic, as shown by his next speech. Another examples of this type of ambiguity, where it is clarified by the speaker, is the following, from a telephone conversation between the President and Dean that is not transcribed in Rodino 1974:

30. WHT:131

P: ...You see your own people have got to have confidence or they are not going to step up and defend us. You see our problem there, don't you?

D: And I think at the same time it would be good to brief these people [lower down in the Administration] on what Executive Privilege means, so they can go our and speak about it. Some of them are floundering.

P: And why it is necessary.

D: I thought about having someone prepare some material that can be put out by the Congressional people so they can understand, people can understand. It is tremendous to have a piece of paper that they know they can talk from.

The people lower down in the Administration are the Representor of the situation lower down in the Administration with respect to Watergate. Dean has put the Congressional people into an agent by-phrase because they as a unit are not the Representor of the topic, but then he runs the risk of having his sentence interpreted as a Janus sentence because the agent by-phrase receives clause stress. (Note that this sentence is a counterexample to my observation on page 255 that in relative clauses the choice of active or passive generally seems to be dependent on the relative animacy of the referents of the two major arguments of the verb.) The result of having the passive sentence interpreted as a Janus sentence would be that they in the following clause would be taken to refer to the putative new sentence topic, the Congressional people. Dean therefore recasts the sentence, substituting people as the

subject. This in itself is not a very clear reference (see Section 5.5 below for a discussion of indefinite subjects), but the mere fact of the correction alerts a hearer to the fact that the most obvious (because closest) candidate for anaphor (possible because the sentence can be interpreted as a Janus sentence) is not the correct one. It turns out, then, that the agented passive in 30 is intended as a Transitory-Agent Passive rather than a New-Topic Passive.

When the by-phrase is unstressed, it is always non-topic-changing in the examples I have looked at. In actual fact unstressed by-phrases are rare because it is rare that a contentive element follows the agent by-phrase -- which is what makes an agented passive useful as a Janus sentence -- and usually it is the last post-verbal element that receives the clause stress. So if there is an agent by-phrase, it is usually the normal candidate for clause stress. In 31-33 are examples of passives with unstressed by-phrases, repeated from pages 250, 212 and 258 above, respectively. In none of the cases does the agent by-phrase herald a new topic. This is representative for my whole corpus:

31. NSFM:126
And when the CJP started their campaign, they were told by these people that they were going to contribute directly to the Israel Relief Fund and they got a little panicky.
32. NSFM:281
Judy chose me to represent all present employees who are not covered by the decree, the way she interprets it, because I don't have the five years' seniority that would entitle me to back pay, since I had left for a while when I had my first two kids.
33. JC:95
D: The, uh, I, when I say this is a, a growing cancer, uh, I say it for reasons like this. Bud Krogh, in his testimony before the Grand Jury, was forced to perjure himself. Uh, he is

...haunted by it. Uh, Bud said, "I haven't had a pleasant day on the job."

In all three cases, the object of the by-phrase is old information; in 33 it is even a pronoun. In each case the verb receives the clause stress because the by-phrase is old information.

In the New-Topic Passive, in summary, the object of the by-phrase is new information, and becomes the sentence topic for the subsequent discourse for a shorter or longer stretch of discourse. The New-Topic Passive is a special case of the Focus-of-Attention Passive, because for the sentence containing the passive, the subject is still the focus of attention, though that changes immediately afterwards.

5.4.2.3 The Emphatic-Agent Passive

In the Emphatic-Agent Passive, the sentence is passivized in order to put the agent in the position of prominence for purposes of contrast, outrage, etc. This means that the object of the by-phrase receives contrastive stress (rather than clause stress, as in the case of the New-Topic Passive or other passives, or no stress at all). The Emphatic-Agent Passive does bear a similarity with the New-Topic Passive in that it can occur in a Janus sentence, though it does not have to, whereas in the case of a New-Topic Passive it by definition must. In Section 1 of this chapter (page 214) I offered the example below:

34. JC:45f.

P: ...Let's forget this, remember, this was not done by the White House. This was done by the Committee to Re-Elect, and Mitchell was the Chairman, correct?

In this case the object of the by-phrase also serves to gradually switch the Representor from "this" -- the controversy around the President's position on executive privilege -- via the White House and the Committee to Re-Elect to Mitchell. This constitutes a jumping up to a higher discourse topic, and back down to another branch of the higher discourse topic: the executive privilege issue is part of the White House scene during the Watergate scandal; the White House scene includes the events surrounding the 1972 election, which includes the Committee to Re-Elect (the President), and Mitchell is a prominent participant in that subscene, being the Chairman of the Committee.

All occurrences of the Emphatic-Agent Passive in my corpus are also examples of another use of the passive, with the reason for emphasis superimposed. In this way the passive in 34 is both an Emphatic-Agent Passive and a New-Topic Passive (and a Focus-of-Attention Passive). The passive sentence in 35 is both a Focus-of-Attention Passive and an Emphatic-Agent Passive, perhaps also a New-Topic Passive; the emphasis on the agent makes the passive structure all the more appropriate, since this puts the emphasized element at the end of the sentence:

35a. JC:92

- D: All right, you've got [clears throat] the Cubans' lawyer, a man by the name of Rothblatt, who is a no good, publicity seeking, son-of-a-bitch, to be very frank about it. He has had to be turned down and tuned off. He was canned by his own people because they didn't trust him. They were trying to run a different route than he wanted to run.
- b. His own people canned him because they didn't trust him.
 - c. He was canned by them because they didn't trust him.

Although the Judiciary-Committee transcript does not go so far as to

make indications of intonation, I think the most likely intonation on the passive in 35a is rising "outrage" intonation on his own people, peaking on people. In this passage, the Cubans and his own people must refer to the same group of people, so the object of the by-phrase in the agented passive clause is not new information. But referred to via their relation to Rothblatt they are new information. Note that referred to via their designation as Cubans they cannot occur with outrage intonation as the object of a passive by-phrase, as in 35c. In either case the lawyer is more the focus of attention than the Cubans. Considering the his own people as a new entity, the passive can be considered a New-Topic Passive, since the speaker continues with they in subject position, referring to the same group as his own people. (Later, Rothblatt becomes the sentence topic again.)

Another example of an Emphatic-Agent Passive is found in 36a.

36a. NSFM:348

After the baby was born they called and wanted me to come back, but I had gotten used to being at home and I didn't want to leave my baby to be raised by anybody else, so I just told them no.

b. I didn't want anybody else to raise my baby...

In this example the emphasis is not as strong, but the slight element of contrast makes the passive that much more appropriate than, for example, 36b. It may be objected that 36b is not an exact equivalent of the passive in 36a, and this is true. But as I will argue in Section 5.6, to insist too much on exact equivalents between the active and passive forms is to distort what speakers do when they choose constructions. If the speaker had wanted to have anybody else in subject position, as in

36b, the presence of to leave in the passive equivalent would not have stopped her. The Emphatic-Agent Passive in 36a is also a Transitory-Agent Passive, since the referents to anybody else are never mentioned again.

Thus all occurrences of the three minor uses of the agented passive are special cases of one of the three major uses of the agented passive that we have seen. Nevertheless they are interesting in their own right because they shed further light on the kinds of reasons for which the agented passive is used. The Irresponsibility Passive shows, first, the interaction between considerations of topic and considerations of agent, and second, it shows again that considerations of both topic and agent are relevant in the determination of subjecthood: in order to downplay the agent characteristic of responsibility (blame), the agent is removed from subject position so as to imply that any consideration about the agent is irrelevant (because nontopical). The New-Topic Agent illustrates the fact that topics are not generally new information; and the Emphatic-Agent Passive illustrates the fact that topics are typically entities in the discourse lacking any element of surprise (cf. Givón 1981).

5.4.3 Why Include a By-Phrase?

The Transitory-Agent Agented Passive and the Focus-of-Attention Passive seem so far to be quite similar to the Agent-Irrelevant Agentless Passive and to the Patient-Effect Passive, respectively. In both the Transitory-Agent Agented Passive and the Agent-Irrelevant Agentless

Passive, the agent is not necessary to the progress of the topic, and in both the Focus-of-Attention Agented Passive and the Patient-Effect Agentless Passive, the patient is more topical than the agent. Similarly, the Less-Agentive Agented Passive seems to be similar to the General-Agent, the Corporate-Agent and the Situation-Agent Agentless Passives in that in all these cases the passive is used because the entity filling the agent slot in the case frame is not very agentive. Why include a by-phrase when the reason for using an agented passive is so similar to a reason for using an agentless passive, without a by-phrase? A by-phrase can be used when the agent participant in the event is crucial but not as the focus of attention. An example is 3 above (page 249), repeated as 37 here:

37. JC:115
 D: Hunt, Hunt is now talking in terms of being out by Christmas.
 H: This year?
 D: This year. Uh, he was told by O'Brien, who is my conveyer of doom back and forth,
 H: Yeah.
 D: uh, that, uh, hell he'd be lucky if he were out a year from now, after the Ervin hearings were, uh, you know, over.
 (a) He said, "How in the Lord's name could you be commuted that quickly?"
 (b) He said, "Well, that's my commitment from Colson."

Neither O'Brien nor anything about him is the topic, and he is not mentioned again either before or after this occurrence; but mentioning him proves (for the speaker at least and for the hearers if they share the speaker's assumptions) the trustworthiness of the information Hunt was given that contradicted Colson's information.

Another example is 7 given on page 210 and repeated as 38 here:

38. JC:56

P: No problem with Sullivan. We'll put him-- I mean, he's a valuable man. Uh, now, would the FBI then turn on him, piss on him?

D: There would be some effort at that. That's right, they would say he's disgruntled. He was canned by Hoover. He is angry, he's coming back.

Hoover is not a focus of attention: he is not mentioned before or after this occurrence in the by-phrase, in this stretch of discourse.

Nevertheless, at the point where this information about the agent is given it is absolutely crucial. In order for it to be plausible for people to allege Sullivan was disgruntled with the FBI, it has to be known that the person who "canned" him was Hoover, the late director of the FBI.

The passive is therefore used to help keep the discourse on track. On the one hand, it is used to avoid sidetracks; on the other hand, it is used, in Janus sentences, to help designate a new topic. It avoids sidetracks by enabling elements which are potential subject (and therefore topic) candidates either not to occur (in agentless passives) or to occur tucked away in a by-phrase (in agented passives). This makes it impossible for the hearer to conclude that that element perhaps is of topical importance after all, except in the special case of Janus sentences, where two different strategies overlap and give conflicting results; or that it is more agentive than the speaker would wish to imply.

5.5 Alternatives to Passive: Indefinite Subjects

The agentless passive is not the only way speakers have of avoiding the mention of an agent. There are at least three other ways in English:

- put someone, people, they, you, one in subject position
- use a gerund
- use an "innocuous subject" (see below)

In this section I will primarily be discussing the first of these ways to avoid mention of an agent, but for completeness notice should be made of the other two ways. An example of a gerund used to eliminate mention of an agent is the following:

1. There was a lot of drinking and fighting.

By an "innocuous subject" I mean a subject which is not topical or particularly agentive, but which is used for nothing so much as a placeholder: to indicate that there is no entity which fits the prototype for subjects in the frame of the sentence. The nature of this "innocuous subject" is such as to render it highly unlikely that a hearer would misinterpret it as a topical or agentive entity. An example is found in the last line of 2:

2. JC:101
D: Uh, that's what re--, what really troubles me is, you know,
(1) will this thing not break some day and
P: Yeah.
D: the whole thing -- domino situation,

P: Yeah.

D: you know, they just, I think if it starts crumbling, fingers will be pointing.

The last sentence of 2 can be contrasted with the other possibilities in 3:

- 3a. Fingers will be pointing.
- b. *Fingers will be pointed.
- c. People will be pointing their fingers ?(at us).
- d. Democrats will be pointing their fingers ?(at us).
- e. Ervin and company will be pointing their fingers ?(at us).

The most effective way to reduce attention on an agent is the way chosen by Dean in 2.

Sentences with an indefinite subject someone, people, you, they, one are interesting to look at as alternatives to passive because at first glance they offer a counterexample to the position that subjects code agents and topics. It is not likely that an entity like people, you, they, etc. would be the sentence topic, the Representor of a discourse topic, though such an entity might be the agent. We will see, however, that in fact the use of indefinites you, they, someone and people serves to weakly corroborate this point of view, but also to complicate it.

The questions I want to consider in this section are the following:

1. How do these choices differ among themselves?
2. Why use the passive when you can use one of these?

The data for this section comes mostly from NSFM, which is a more

fruitful source for these indefinite words, especially they and you, than the White House Transcripts. I think this is due to the differences in the nature of the two documents: NSFM is a collection of oral histories, in which the speakers have to describe situations and sketch backgrounds to the interviewer, and give opinions relating to these situations and backgrounds. In the White House Transcripts, on the other hand, backgrounds and knowledge of situations are mostly shared, and the discussion is largely on the pragmatic level: particularly, how to react to a given situation. They and you, as we will see, are particularly suited to the former type of discourse.

5.5.1 They and You

By having two terms, you and they, a speaker can set up two categories or groups. The group designated by you is closer to the speaker than the group designated by they. When a speaker uses they, she creates distance between herself and the group so designated -- either because they are in charge of the activity and she is not, or because they are adversaries of the speaker (often these two reasons go together, in my corpus), or because they do not belong to the speaker's group, whether for social, geographical, institutional, national, religious or other reasons. You can also be used to refer to a group. But a group referred to by you has some solidarity with the speaker; either she is in the group or closely related to it.

After discussing some examples of the uses of you, they, someone, people and one I will discuss the differences between using these and

using the passive. I will also discuss Thompson (1982), who also considers the use of the indefinite they as an alternative to passive. My findings partly contradict hers, which she considered tentative in any case. At the end of this section I will consider how best to incorporate these uses of you and they into the meaning of these words.

In 3 is an example showing the interplay between they, you and passive. The speaker has filed a grievance with her company, U.S. Steel, for eliminating her job. This meant that at least while the grievance was under consideration and while she wanted it, she had to be given a job in the same union local. She was made a gate guard, but the powers that be did not particularly want women in that position, and discouraged it in every more or less legal way they could. This fragment comes from the middle of the speaker's enumeration of these ways (3b follows 3a immediately). I have put in boldface the indefinite they's and you's and the passives.

3. NSFM:267f.

- a. Also, they put me in the truck gate which is called "discouragement gate," for over a year. It's the hardest job in the department. You take the bills and weigh the trucks, every steel truck that goes out, anywhere from five hundred to seven hundred a day. It's not a physically hard job, except that you're on your feet, you're out in the hot sun or the cold, with the wind from the lake. And you supposedly get a lot of abuse from truck drivers. I never had that problem with them. I got along better with the truck drivers than I do with management.
- b. They put you on this gate where they can watch you closer, because there's the head guard and several management people down at that gate. They made it quite difficult. I was watched constantly. I knew I had to go by the letter. Maybe the fellows could be nice and smile and let somebody go past them without showing a badge, or let something out in the car that they shouldn't. I just couldn't afford to take those chances because I knew I was being watched.

The difference between *they* and *you* in this fragment is quite clear. *They* is a set of people which does not include the speaker or the hearer: often, this set of people has an adversarial feeling about them as well. This adversary aspect of *they* is quite common throughout NSFM but not strongly necessary. An example where the adversary aspect is largely missing is found in 4, spoken by a black woman from Georgia, now working in Atlanta organizing domestic workers, who when she was younger went to Chicago for a time to be a maid:

4. NSFM:145

I learned so much in the North. I would not have been able to organize these women without it, if I didn't have some kind of experience with the human elements of life. In my time off, I'd go to the cabarets. This is like a restaurant or a night spot, but in the North they always called them cabarets. I would order some food and that would give me my chance to sit there and look. And that's how I learned the movement of people, how people react to things. And on a socializing level, it makes different people act differently where they go in and drink alcohol and eat.

Though there is no feeling that the speaker stands in an adversary relation to the people designated by *they* (quite the contrary), nevertheless the feeling of otherness is there: speaker definitely does not feel she belongs to that group. (In this case, the interviewer does belong to that group, since she is white and comes from the North, but this seems to be ignored here.)

You, on the other hand, is a set of people which includes the speaker and the hearer, at least as far as solidarity is concerned. Most of the time in NSFM the set includes the speaker in fact, that is, she is recounting a situation which she experienced, but by using you she indicates that the question whether she personally experienced it or

not is not important. The interplay between you and I makes this clear. When it is important that the speaker experienced the event, she uses I; when it is not, she uses you.

Sometimes the speaker is not in the set but by using you she indicates that the members of the set are her kind of people. An example is found in 5:

5. NSFM:151

I don't think any child has to run and do what every Tom, Dick or Harry has to do. Because Tom, Dick and Harry can get you in a thousand dollars' worth of trouble and they can't get you out of it. I had a tight rein on my children and I guided them like I was guided.

The you in 5 designates a set that includes the speaker's children: her kind of people.

There is also an other-type set which is designated by you, but the members of it are not as far removed as ones designated by they: at least the speaker's set and the other-you set are on speaking terms! Both types of you occur in fragment 6, where the same speaker as in 4 and 5 gives her reaction to the women's liberation movement. All the sections in 6 follow one another: they are divided for ease of exposition:

6. NSFM:172

- a. I look at a man and I am his helpmaker. But I don't put him up on no pedestal either. My husband waits on me as much as I wait on him. I've been a free woman all my life. I've been making my own decisions, but I'll respect yours and I'll go halfway with yours.
- b. But a man is your protection.
- c. When he walks up to accept you from your mother and father, he asks for you, doesn't he? Then he takes on the full responsibility that he's taken from Daddy.

d. So why do you think he's taken your rights?

In 6a the speaker is setting up two opposing sides: I and you. By I she designates herself as the prototype for all women, and by you she designates the husband of this prototype. In 6b the referent of you, on the other hand, is the set of all women, including herself. In 6c and d, you still refers to the set of all women, but again the idea of opposing sides creeps in, till it is quite strong in 6d. Here the one side is herself and the other side is the women who fret about their husbands taking away their rights, mostly younger than herself. Nevertheless, solidarity remains in 6c-d. Though the speaker may disagree with these women, nevertheless there is solidarity between them: they all are members of a higher-level group relevant in this discussion, the group of women, which is contrasted with another group, the group of men.

With they, it is not always clear whether it is an indefinite they or not, i.e. whether there is a referent or not. In 7, for example, the referent of they could be construed to be the National Women's Political Caucus (or something) or women's liberationists in general. In any case it doesn't really matter: the class does not include the speaker, ideologically or in fact.

7. NSFM:170

Once I was a speaker at the Tarrytown Conference Center, in New York. I think it was the National Women's Political Caucus or something like that. But it really bothered me to see that they don't include low-income women. [10]

In the following example the same group of people is first designated you, showing solidarity, then designated they, showing

adversary status, then back to you, showing solidarity again:

8. NSFM:252

But I don't think I'd ever want to be a full-time organizer for a union. I think that we can get more done the way we're going right now. And that's kind of an isolated job, the way I see it, in relation to people I've met that are organizers. You can become part of an organizing caucus to some extent, but you're never completely part of it. And I don't think you're even completely trusted either, no matter how hard you try.

Also, it seems like union organizers don't follow through with the whole thing. At a certain point, they disengage themselves from some of the movement. So they start it, then leave, go on to something else, and never become fully part of it. And I don't know if I could do that. The way I feel, to just pick up and leave like that, you have to be thinking a little bit more of yourself or of the union itself, than the people you're organizing.

With this final switch to you, the speaker does not indicate approval, but she does indicate solidarity, as in the occurrences of you in 6d.

5.5.2 Someone and People

An indefinite subject which does not convey a notion either of solidarity or of otherness is somebody. However, somebody is often to be understood referentially, and this is not always appropriate. An example is in 9:

9. NSFM:45

My father was like the town schoolteacher. [...] My father would sit down at night and we'd all sit around him and he'd tell us stories. Then somebody donated a piano and my sister used to take piano lessons next door for twenty-five cents a week. My cousin upstairs used to play the guitar and my brother used to play the violin and my father would organize plays. We were always doing something.

The sentence with indefinite subject is repeated in 10a. There are two

passive alternatives to this sentence, 10b and 10c. In 10d and 10e are two other active alternatives:

- 10a. Then somebody donated a piano.
- b. Then a piano was donated.
- c. Then we were given a piano.

To use 10b would place too much focus on the piano, which is an accoutrement rather than a Representor of the scene. But this does not explain what is wrong with 10c, which does not sound as plausible in 9 as the actually-occurring sentence 10a, even though we is a perfectly good Representor for the scene. The reason is, I think, that 10c does not convey that it was a specific person in the speaker's memory -- though the specific identity is not relevant to the story -- who donated the piano. Compare 11:

- 11. NSFM:77
 [Speaking of a day care center the speaker set up:] And look at the mother and the psychological effect it has on her. She's so much at ease and she feels so secure knowing that the child is well taken care of and eats well. They're given breakfast, they're given a snack, then they're given a hot lunch and then another snack. So even if the mother doesn't have time to cook at night, the child has eaten well all day.

In 11, contrary to 9, give passivized with the recipient put in subject position sounds fine. Now compare the boldface sentence with the corresponding active with someone in subject position as in 12:

- 12. Someone gives them breakfast, someone gives them a snack,
 then someone gives them a hot lunch and then another snack.

The someones in 12 are referential to the point that the idea is conveyed that idfferent people given the children the various meals.

The difference with using someone in 9 and using it in 11 is that in 9 referentiality is appropriate and in 11 it is not.

Another indefinite that can be used is people. It also can be used when there is neither distance nor solidarity. In my data, however, people is used almost exclusively as subject of an intransitive or in another syntactic relation whose referent is indefinite, nonreferential, and general. In 13 and 14 are two examples of people as the subject of an intransitive; in 15 and 16 people is used in another relation.

13. NSFM:112
At meetings I go to people have just come out and said, "Well you being white would feel that way."
14. NSFM:113
The association was supposed to do counseling. Some counseling they did! If people went to the banks, they'd send them directly to the Association for Better Housing.
15. NSFM:124
I don't really think I have leadership. I think I just have some people that like me, and that's not really leadership. I like people and I just got to know a lot of them and I guess the feeling became mutual.
16. NSFM:124
Direct contact with people is very important to me. The first day I moved in here I was knocking on doors and introducing myself to people. [...] I love people around me and I love to be in on things. I'm planning to organize a Worley Street Block Association one day, pull people out and have them get to know each other.

Of ten occurrences of people in subject position, only one was in a transitive sentence. In that one, the direct object was even less appropriate as subject than an indefinite like people; also, as shown in 17b, the passive alternative is for some (possibly related) reason of low acceptability:

17a. NSFM:403

When I finally came back to office work, I went back to receptionist. Even though the money was not all that great, there was a certain amount of respect that people seemed to show to women that worked in offices that you didn't get in factory work.

- b.??There was a certain amount of respect that seemed to get/be shown to women that worked in offices...

The alternative subject to people is a certain amount of respect, which is just as indefinite and nonreferential and is also nonhuman, and so is an even less appropriate subject than people.

5.5.3 Passive vs. Indefinite Subjects

In short, they is used to create distance between the speaker and the group talked about, you is used to talk about a group with which the speaker feels some solidarity; someone is used to speak of a referential indefinite, and people is used as an alternative to passive when passive is impossible or inappropriate. Thus the function of passive is different from the functions of these four words, and they are not really equivalent at all. This does not mean that in a particular context it may not be possible to have more than one of these possibilities. But a speaker would be asserting a slightly different thing depending on the choice that was made. Before we look at an example, it is necessary to see that the use of you, they and someone in subject position makes it impossible to designate something else as having topic properties. Sometimes this is what is desired, as in 3 (page 282) above. I repeat it here:

3. NSFM:267f.

- a. Also, they put me in the truck gate which is called

"discouragement gate," for over a year. It's the hardest job in the department. You take the bills and weigh the trucks, every steel truck that goes out, anywhere from five hundred to seven hundred a day. It's not a physically hard job, except that you're on your feet, you're out in the hot sun or the cold, with the wind from the lake. And you supposedly get a lot of abuse from truck drivers. I never had that problem with them. I got along better with the truck drivers than I do with management.

- b. They put you on this gate where they can watch you closer, because there's the head guard and several management people down at that gate. They made it quite difficult. I was watched constantly. I knew I had to go by the letter. Maybe the fellows could be nice and smile and let somebody go past them without showing a badge, or let something out in the car that they shouldn't. I just couldn't afford to take those chances because I knew I was being watched.

In 3a the discourse topic is the job, not any particular person acting in the job -- including the speaker: so you is perfect as subject. In 3b, when the topic switches from a generalized description of the job (with adversary overtones, hence the use of they), back to the speaker and her reaction to the job, this is made extra clear by sticking the first-person pronoun in subject position. This makes 18a better than 18b in this fragment, though 18b is certainly also possible (the switch from an indefinite to a definite pronoun signals the topic shift weakly):

- 18a. I was watched constantly.
b. They watched me constantly.

It is a question of weighing the different effects of the different constructions and effects of other parts of the sentence. For example, what is more important: emphasizing the adversary nature of the vague agent or emphasizing the topic status of the (resumed) topic? The speaker evidently thought the latter. The weighing of different effects in this respect is also clear at the end of 3b, repeated here as 19a,

when compared to 19b:

19. I just couldn't afford to take those chances because I
knew...
- a. ...I was being watched.
 - b. ...they were watching me.

The speaker decides to emphasize the topic status of I, also because the adversary status of they is carrying through from before, and also because it is implicit in the meaning of the lexical item being watched as it is used here -- so much so that that 19b would perhaps emphasize the adversary notion a bit too strongly.

Thus the use of the indefinites you, they, people and someone serves both to weakly corroborate the point of view that subjects code agents and topics and to complicate this view. This research weakly corroborates this point of view because these indefinites can be used when there is no specific nominal topic to take up subject position. They complicate it because they provide more evidence that not all subjects are topics -- though they preserve their identity as primaries. In fact, such indefinites cannot become sentence topics and this shelters the primary attribution, in the following way. Even if they are in subject position they will not be construed as sentence topics. As a result, they can stay in subject position even though they are not topics: they do not have to occur in an agent by-phrase thus sacrificing some of the feeling of agentivity in order to avoid their being construed as topics.

My research thus expands Thompson's (1982) findings on the relation between passive and indefinites in two ways: in the first

place, I look at more indefinites than just they; and in the second place, I find more reasons for using they. Thompson's conclusion is that

although the numbers are too small for us to be confident of this as a prediction, it does appear from my data that in informal English, a non-anaphoric they in the active is favored over the passive whenever the inferrable but unimportant agent is "those typically in charge of such activities." (Thompson 1982:5)

I found that the basic meaning of they is otherness, distance from the speaker, and that sometimes this distance was due to the fact that the group designated by they is in charge of the activity and the speaker is not, a situation which creates distance for the speaker; or the group is in an adversary relation to the speaker; or they do not belong to the speaker's group, whether for social, geographical, institutional, national, religious or other reasons. Usually the hearer does not belong to the group either.

5.5.4 Prototype Pronouns

This use of they could be considered a totally different one from the anaphoric use of they, as in 20:

20. When our neighbors moved in, they seemed very nice.

But this seems undesirable, for two reasons: first, it leaves us with the necessity of explaining why the same word is used in the two situations. Second, it is often hard to know where the one type begins and the other type leaves off. Consider the occurrences of they in 21:

21. NSFM:101

- a. By then, several black families had taken over property there. They bought conventional. They worked very hard for

their money and they were fine people. On Esmond Street next door to us was Judge Godene and his children, and there was a professional dancer and her husband. We would walk into Roxbury and go into the bagel place and there were blacks around all the time. There was no fear then at all.

- b. There was no problem because they were the northern blacks then. There's a big difference between the southern blacks who were very oppressed and the northern blacks.

22. NSFM:102

The organization started in 1967 and we came across an article very unexpectedly about a rabbi in Laurelton, New York, where the community seemed to be having the same problems that we were. The rabbi was coming home from services and noticed four "for sale" signs on one street. He went to the next street and he noticed some more "for sale" signs. Then he decided to investigate it on his own and this intrigued us.

What happened was they were having racial tensions and fights in a community where they never had those problems before. When they found it was the speculators coming in and blockbusting, they decided to open up their own real estate agency, for no profit.

In 21a they is fully anaphoric: the antecedent is several black families. The they in 21b (which immediately follows 21a) has a more tenuous link with its antecedent: it is not several black families as in 21a but rather something like "the black families that moved into our neighborhood at first," an antecedent which is recoverable from a scene which is a discourse topic rather than from the preceding linguistic context. The same is true in 22: in the previous paragraph the speaker has mentioned a rabbi and a community, and so from that a non-lexical antecedent can be construed: the residents of the community where the rabbi lived and worked. It is clear that there is a gradation between the regular anaphoric they and the indefinite they. It is widely assumed that the third person is best defined negatively: a referent is neither the speaker (the first person) nor the hearer (the second person). The study here on the indefinite use of the third person plural bears this

out: the basic meaning of the third person is separateness from both the speaker and the hearer. From there one can get a nonprototypical meaning, via an associational chain, of an adversary to the speaker (who is also not a member of the hearer's group), or an expert or authority (which the speaker is not).

The meaning of the third person plural thus has prototype structure. The same can be said of the second person, you. The basic meaning is: the hearer. In the plural, it is the hearer's group. Via an associational chain, it becomes a group with which the speaker is in solidarity -- though not (necessarily) the same as the speaker -- since prototypically the speaker and the hearer have enough solidarity to be on speaking terms.

I expect that we will find that the first person has a prototypical structure as well. Fragment 6a (page 284), repeated here, would bear this out:

6. NSFM:172

- a. I look at a man and I am his helpmaker. But I don't put him up on no pedestal either. My husband waits on me as much as I wait on him. I've been a free woman all my life. I've been making my own decisions, but I'll respect yours and I'll go halfway with yours.

The reference of I in the first two sentences is different from the reference of I in the last three. In the last three sentences, the speaker is simply referring to herself. In the first two sentences, on the other hand, she is referring to all the women who hold the same opinion as herself in this area. The identification of the speaker with this group is thus even closer than it is in the case of you. We thus

have a gradation of persons which accords very well with the traditional meanings attributed to first, second and third persons:

Person	Traditional Meaning	Prototypical Meaning
first	speaker	identification with self
second	hearer	solidarity with self
third	not speaker, not hearer	separate from self, no solidarity with self

The behavior of indefinite pronouns thus leads one to conclude that the meaning of pronouns, also, has prototype structure.

5.6 An Excursus on Passive and Communication

In this section I have some considerations about the relation of the exercise I am engaging in (figuring out uses of the passive) to what people do when they speak. I address the following points:

1. possible distortions due to the interaction of other constructions
2. possible distortion due to the dissimilarity of what I do to what speakers do.
3. possible distortion because of picking out one construction out of many able to eliminate or background participants in a scene.

5.6.1 Interaction with other Constructions

An interesting example showing the interaction of different constructions in a single utterance is found in 1c, repeated from page 265 (1a-d is a single passage, divided up for ease of exposition):

1. NSFM:258
 - a. I was raised Missouri Synod Lutheran and sent to parochial school from kindergarten through the eighth grade. The atmosphere was extremely strict. It was really a parochial school, right to the letter, and they can have too much of an influence on your life.
 - b. Then, of course, certain kids were the best in the class and others were constantly put down.
 - c. I always felt put down by those teachers.
 - d. It was really traumatic when I moved from that small school, where I had gone to class with the same twenty children and the same three teachers for eight years of school, and moved into a high school where there were hundreds.
2. I always felt put down.
3. I always felt that those teachers put me down.

As is clear from the context around the agentive passive, the teachers are only a peripheral element of the story, evoked by the going-to-school scene. Even though the teachers have not been mentioned in so many words before the agentive passive, they are not new information there, as is shown syntactically by the presence of the demonstrative pronoun in the by-phrase and by the possibility of having low intonation on the by-phrase, with clause stress on down. The backgroundedness of the teachers, by itself, is enough reason to use an agented passive, as we have seen in section 5.4.1.1 above (Transitory-Agent Passives). But in this case, the teachers are so peripheral, so clearly evoked by the going-to-school scene, and their role in that scene is so clearly evoked, that in the previous sentence, 1b, they do not need to be mentioned at all as agents of the passive were

(constantly) put down for the reader [hearer] to know that that is who is doing the putting down in 1b. But as we saw in Section 5.4.2.1 on the Irresponsibility Passive (page 265), the mention of the agent is necessary here in order to avoid the implication that the feeling of being put-down was due to some personal problem on the subject's part.

It is clear that no active/passive interchange is possible here without changing meaning more drastically than what is usually encountered in active-passive pairs. A comparison of 1c and 3 confirms this and also points to the reason. Feel, when governing a reduced infinitival complement as in 1c, requires that the reduced complement have an understood subject identical with the subject of feel itself (in other words, feel requires Equi when the infinitival complement is reduced). This means that an active or passive reduced complement of feel cannot have an equally-reduced counterpart opposite to it in voice. There are three levels of reduction for complements of feel: 1c represents the most-reduced type (Equi required), 3 the least-reduced (Equi irrelevant), and 4, with a full infinitival complement, the intermediate type (Equi blocked, as shown by 4b):

- 4a. I always felt those teachers to be putting me down.
- 4b. I always felt *(myself) to be put down by those teachers.

The situation with feel is a standard example of the type of "syntactic disintegration" discussed by Ann Borkin (1973:55) in the following words:

...the syntactic processes of both raising [i.e., changing the complement from a sentential one as in 3 to an infinitival one as in 4a, jvo] and to be deletion [i.e., changing the complement from a full infinitival one as in 4b to a reduced infinitival one as in

1c, jvo] parallel the same kind of semantic disintegration of whole propositions and potential states of affairs relevant to an empirical reality, into elements whose status is more dependent on human perception, conventions, and desires.

In other words, the complement in a sentence like 1c should be, according to Borkin, relatively more subjective and the complement in a sentence like 3 should be more objective. This turns out to be exactly right: the complement of 1c indicates a situation that is much more emotionally-based than the situation referred to in the complement in 3, which is much more cognitively-based.

An explanation for the syntactic-semantic parallelism discovered by Borkin is offered by Lakoff and Johnson 1980:128ff. where the metaphor "(syntactic) closeness [linearly, jvo] is strength of effect" is discussed: the closer two elements are together in a sentence, the greater the effect of the one on the other. With feel the metaphor is more "(syntactic) closeness is directness of experience" but these two metaphors are members of one family of metaphors since a more direct experience has a stronger effect on the experiencer; a subjective reaction is of more consequence to an experiencer than an objective reaction to an event.

In 1c, then, we have two communicative intentions with conflicting normal syntactic reflexes, where the conflict is resolved by the use of a less usual construction, an agented passive. The speaker wants to indicate a directness of experience, which requires Equi to bring the lower verb right next to the main verb, requiring the passive in this case. But she also wants to mention the subject to have them shoulder the blame. The result is an agented passive.

The fact of all these other effects interacting with passive in the complement of feel points to the fact that it is artificial to separate out passive and study the reasons for its use without at least acknowledging the interaction of other constructions with the passive in certain instances. The passive structure in the following passage is another example, previously mentioned on page 263.

5. JC:79

P: Well, what is the Dean summary of the day about?

D: John caught me on the way out and asked me about why Gray was holding back on information, if that was under instructions from us. And it, uh, it was and it wasn't. Uh, it was instructions proposed by the Attorney General, consistent with your press conference statement that no further raw data was to be turned over to the

P: Full committee.

D: full committee.

P: Right.

6. It was instructions the Attorney General proposed, ...

7. The Attorney General proposed those instructions, ...

8. The instructions had been proposed by the Attorney General,
...

As I mentioned on page 264, If Dean had said 6 it would have sounded as if the Attorney General had been acting independently, which, as the previous context makes clear, is not the case. By making the Attorney General the subject, Dean would have seemed to be placing the responsibility on him. In fact he is part of the Administration which was corporately responsible for the instructions. This is then a true case of the Transitory-Agent Passive, but complicated by the further communicative need to use a referent-delaying cleft.

5.6.2 Research vs. Life

The examples in 1 and 5 thus force us to face up to the fact that the central premise of the exercise I am engaging in, comparing the passive with its active counterpart, is at best artificial and at worst misleading. The central premise is that when a speaker or writer is about to utter or use a passive sentence which has an active counterpart or vice versa, he or she is faced with the decision whether to use the active or the passive. In fact, of course, that is not true, for several reasons:

(i) The several variations on the passive in 1c and 5 show that even if it is true that a speaker while speaking in some sense chooses between an active and its passive counterpart, or vice versa -- and I will argue in (iii) below that this is not true -- these constructions would not be the only possibilities but rather they interact with others. In the boldface sentence in 5 Dean uses a referent-delaying cleft. In 1c the passive interacts with the need for "syntactic disintegration" to indicate subjectivity of experience. The addition of a by-phrase in 1c is, as was mentioned above, a repair mechanism to counteract one consequence of subjectivity: that the feeling was the speaker's fault. Other sorts of interactions are possible, for example the tough-construction and related constructions:

9. He is a bear to be evaluated by.

In general, I do not consider these various interactions in this dissertation. This is one way in which this study is incomplete.

(ii) A shortcoming related to (i) is that this approach does not deal

with the difference between using a passive in a main clause and using it in a subordinate clause or more reduced construction. When the verb under consideration is in a main clause, it makes very good sense to ask what the relation is between the surface subject and the sentence topic. But when the verb under consideration is in a lower-down construction and the subject is different from the one in the main clause, or even when the verb is in a main clause in a compound sentence with a different subject in the different main clauses, then the picture becomes more muddy. (I hasten to add that there are complex sentences where the subordinate clause seems to carry the burden of topic-hood, e.g. sentences with short main clauses like "I think (that) ..." It is not this type of subordinate clause I am talking about.) What is the relation between the subject of the subordinate construction and the topic, and how does that interact with the relation between the main subject and the topic? Not much work has been done on the issue of subjects in subordinate constructions and their relation to topic. Of course, often the problem is no problem because the subordinate construction has the same subject as the higher-up construction. But this is not often enough the case for us to be able to ignore the problem. The following example from NSFM is spoken by a woman who had set up a support and advocacy organization for domestic workers in Atlanta:

10. NSFM:162

- a. At the beginning, I knew some harsh words were going to be said by the maids and the employers.
- b. A lot of the maids were afraid to join.
- c. They were skeptical because they knew what unions had done in the past, and at first "union" was part of the name.

In this passage all four of the situations mentioned above are represented. In 10a the subordinate clause bears the burden of topichood; the subject is an "innocuous subject" (see page 279) to enable the creation of a "Janus sentence" (see page 214). In 10c, the subject of the first subordinate clause ("they knew...") is the same as the subject of the main clause ("they were skeptical") and so there is no topic conflict. But in the second subordinate clause ("what unions had done...") the subject changes and so the question becomes pressing: does the focus of attention or the Representor change from main to subordinate clause, or what? Or is topichood irrelevant in subordinate clauses and does only agentivity play a role? And in 10c there are two main clauses with differing subjects. Has the focus of attention changed again by the second main clause?

(iii) There is no reason to believe that speakers or writers consistently plan out an entire sentence ahead of time rather than, say, coming out with a subject or a delayed subject like "It was instructions" in 5 (page 299) and then tacking an appropriate predicate onto it, couching the remaining elements of the thought in as acceptable a syntactic form as possible. The phenomenon of speakers "getting tangled in their own words" or "getting caught in a corner" and having to start a sentence over, would indicate that the latter production strategy is in effect at least some of the time. The first production decision would then be whether to come out with a noun/pronoun or to use a referent-delaying construction like a cleft or an existential construction. The second production decision is then not whether to use an active or a passive but how to tack all you want to say to the

already-uttered noun/pronoun. The possibilities at that point do not include both an active and a passive unless one uses totally different words -- a totally different thought -- and may include other constructions which have nothing to do with the active/passive dichotomy. Therefore, it is at least an artificial exercise to compare passives and their active counterparts.

5.6.3 A Wide Choice of Constructions

This conception does not require that the noun or pronoun which is uttered first is the Representor or focus of attention of a discourse topic. A telling example from NSFM is found in 11. The speaker, an employee at US Steel, is discussing a class action suit sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW) to protest inadequacies in a consent decree designed to bring employment practices in the steel industry in line with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act.

11. NSFM:281

- a. At first, when the NOW told me I was involved in [the class action suit in the federal court at] Birmingham, I wasn't upset about it at all. I figured all of us were in it together. I had thought Judy Lonnquist, NOW's lawyer, would take the whole group, you know? But at the last meeting here, I found out that that was not the case. She chose three individuals to represent us and I was one. So I'm sure I'm tops on US Steel's [black] list again!
One is a woman down in Birmingham who was terminated because she was married shortly after the war. [...] This woman still had her termination slip and several other things, so she represented all past employees who were discriminated against.
- b. Judy chose me to represent all present employees who are not covered by the decree, the way she interprets it, because I don't have the five years' seniority that would entitle me to back pay, since I had left for a while when I had my first two kids.
- c. So this was a way of pointing out how the decree is

inadequate. And then evidently there's another woman who represents future employees.

The clause under discussion is the first one in 11b: Judy chose me... Alternative forms the speaker could have chosen include not only 12a-b but also formulations like 12c-f, and no doubt others:

- 12a. I was chosen by Judy to represent...
- b. I was chosen to represent...
- c. I am the one that represents...
- d. I represent...
- e. I am representing...
- f. I am supposed to represent...

When the speaker talks about the women representing past and future employees (in the boldface sentences in 11a and 11c respectively), she chooses a form like 12d in both cases, once without and once with a referent-delaying existential construction. Why, then, does she choose to utter the sentence about herself in another form?

The type of situation or event that is in question here has two parts: first the action (the choosing) and then the result (the representing). The important thing is the result, the representing. It has moreover already been stated a few sentences before 11b that Judy did the choosing and that the speaker was one of the ones chosen. the main clause of 11b therefore adds no new information, and, I have suggested, the choosing is not even the most important aspect of the situation or event; so there is no reason for it to be emphasized. A corollary to the idea that the act of choosing is not the important aspect of the event, is that Judy is not the focus of attention of the topic, so there is no reason on that score to make her the subject. She is an agent of the act of choosing, and subjects are prototypically

agents (primaries) and topics, but the action she is the agent of is not as important. The speaker is, in any case, the primary of the more important action, the representing. I can think of two types of reasons why the speaker might have chosen this format; one is in my opinion less likely than the other but both tend in any case to the same result:

(1) The speaker wishes to vary the form of her sentences. It might be considered boring to say

13. She [the woman of 11a down in Birmingham] represented all past employees who were discriminated against. I represent/am representing all present employees who are not covered by the decree... And then evidently there's another woman who represents future employees.

This is the less likely reason for bringing in the action that brought about the result. Although I believe that aesthetic and stylistic considerations do come into play, also in spoken speech, more with some people than with others, the alternative not chosen which is given in 13 is not all that boring. Other variations, like the progressive, or a variation like 12f could also reduce the monotony, if such there be. The referent-delaying tactic of the third sentence also tends to reduce any monotony, though that is not the reason it is used -- not to mention the fact that it is separated by several sentences from the other two.

(2) The speaker might be pulling Judy in for politeness reasons. It is all right to say "she represents..." but to say "I represent..." might be considered as arrogating too much glory to oneself. This effect is muted somewhat when one uses the progressive, perhaps because the progressive denotes a less permanent state than the simple present. It

is totally absent when one uses a variation like 12f,

12f. I am supposed to represent...

which calls into question the speaker's ability to fulfill the responsibilities associated with the honor of representing someone or some group. There are therefore other ways of effacing oneself for reasons of politeness, but pulling Judy in is the one the speaker chose.

There are two possible types of description of the mechanism whereby this effect is accomplished. (a) The reason "I represent..." sounds too boastful is at least partially that it puts the speaker in subject position. This can only be a partial reason because with the other variations which reduce the impression of boastfulness, "I am representing" and "I am supposed to represent," or even I as subject of a passive verb, as in "I was chosen to represent," I is still the subject in all the cases. Boastfulness is reduced by reducing responsibility. This can be done by changing the relation between subject and verb from a more to a less agentive one or by putting the boaster into non-subject position. So, another way to reduce the impression of boastfulness is to remove I from consideration as a candidate for subject position. But then the question becomes what to put in subject position instead. According to our view on the nature of subjects the best thing to do would be to put an agent in subject position, since one can't have the Representor or focus of attention I be the subject. This makes Judy the prime candidate -- or rather Judy plus chose as the verb -- and then the speaker can fit comfortably into the object slot. As subject of represent as infinitive it sounds less

boastful.

(b) A way to reduce boastfulness is to reduce responsibility for the boastful state of affairs obtaining. This can be done by saying, in effect, "She put me in this position! I didn't ask for it." This is what the speaker actually says, practically in so many words, elsewhere (see 11a). This explanation is really the semantic flip side of the syntactic explanation immediately above, and much more satisfying.

This is then an example of a subject that is chosen not because of its topic properties but only because it is not the true topic, though its inherent properties are such that it could be, that is, the referent of this subject is inherently agentive. The point is to make the hearers believe, or to have them at least conventionally agree to seem to believe, that this is the topic, thus deflecting attention from the true topic, herself, which would sound too boastful in this situation. This is not an "innocuous subject" (see page 279) because an innocuous subject is such that no one could suppose its referent to be the topic, as in fingers in 2 on page 279 or some harsh words in 10 on page 301, and so hearers know to look elsewhere for the topic or to look for a new topic to be introduced (as in 10). In 11b, on the other hand, what the speaker specifically does not want is for the hearers to look for another topic, but rather to think (or to pretend to think) that the referent of the subject is the topic, so as to reduce the boastfulness of the subject of represent. A human agent, being the most likely type of entity to become a topic, is the best type of entity to put into subject position to act as a "red herring" of this type. This use of

what one may call a "ceremonial subject" corroborates our view that subjects are prototypically agents and topics, because (a) an agent was chosen, and (b) the effectiveness of the strategy to downplay I depends on the notion that subjects code sentence topics.

5.7 Conclusions

In sections 1 to 4, we saw that there were six reasons to use the agentless passive and six to use the agented passive. I give them here one more time. The reasons to use the agentless passive are as follows:

1. The identity of the agent is irrelevant, "somebody": The Irrelevant-Agent Passive.
2. The agent is very general, "people": The General-Agent Passive.
3. The action of the sentence is a corporate act, with no one agent: The Corporate-Agent Passive.
4. The action of the sentence was not caused by an individual human being, but by a whole situation or scene: The Situation-Agent Passive.
5. The speaker wishes to leave the identity of the agent vague, for such reasons as politeness or expediency, or, sometimes, to reduce the assertion of responsibility for the agent: The Expediency Passive.
6. The emphasis is on the effect of the action on the patient, or on the result, rather than on the action of the agent: The Patient-Effect Passive.

The reasons to use the agentless passive can be summarized in one sentence: the agent is less topical than the patient. This may be because the agent lacks topic properties (this is usually what is the case) or because the patient has them (this is less frequently the case).

The six reasons for using the agented passive show a more complex

meaning for the subject of the agented passive:

1. The identity of the object of the by-phrase is of transitory interest in the discourse: The Transitory-Agent Passive.
2. The patient is the focus of attention: The Focus-of-Attention Passive.
3. The object of the by-phrase would be understood too agentively if subject of an active sentence: The Less-Agentive Passive.
4. The object of the by-phrase has less responsibility, specifically blame, than would be asserted if it were subject of an active sentence: The Irresponsibility Passive.
5. The object of the by-phrase is new (and is to be the new sentence topic): The New-Agent Passive.
6. The object of the by-phrase is emphasized, for reasons of contrast, outrage, etc.: The Emphatic-Agent Passive.

Reasons 1, 2, 5 and 6 together are similar to the reasons for using an agentless passive: the patient is more topical than the agent. Reasons 3 and 4 show, however, that agentivity plays a greater role in the meaning of a subject of an agented passive sentence than in the meaning of a subject of an agentless passive sentence. Many of the less agentive passives could also be considered Transitory Agent or Focus of Attention passives, for example 1 (Transitory-Agent) and 2 (Focus of Attention):

1. NSFM:33
The Anglos use the school and all other jobs for their politics. Even the first mayor we had who ran on the Raza Unida ticket, he was forced out by financial pressures. He was a teacher with a master's degree and he couldn't a teaching job in Cotulla. He had to travel forty miles each way to the job he got. And there's no salary for the mayor either, so after one term he just didn't run again.
2. NSFM:466
Johnny, I think, was one of the ones [of speaker's kids] who had the most difficult time when I got [re]married. He was so used to seeing his older brothers get beat on by his father, he was afraid Don [speaker's new husband] would do the same to him. He voiced this to one of his counselors at school.

The children's father comes up repeatedly, but here the focus of

attention is on one of the brothers, as is also shown by the use of the auxiliary get.

But not all the cases can be reduced to Transitory-Agent or Focus-of-Attention Passives, for example, 3 repeated from page 260:

3. NSFM:289
I really do believe that when you're more of an individual, more of a person, it can only help a marriage. It sure has helped mine. I think that unless a man is threatened by it, and then he has problems, it can't do anything but help. And if it can help marriages, it can help the whole country, the whole society.

In this example neither agent nor patient is a very prototypical topic, but each has properties of topics. The patient is human, but not specific or even referential; the agent is specific and the focus of attention but not human. In these cases, the inherently more agentive entity wins out.

As for the Irresponsibility Passives, a sentence like the passive in 12 on page 213, repeated here as 4,

4. JC:86
D: I called Liddy, uh, on that Monday morning, and I said, "Gordon," I said, "first, I want to know if anybody in the White House was involved in this." And he said, "No, they weren't." I said, "Well, I want to know how in God's name this happened." And he said, "Well, I was pushed without mercy by Magruder to get in there, get more information, that the information, it was not satisfactory."

is possible because it is a conventional use of the Transitory-Agent Passive. One removes the spotlight from the agent onto the patient, thereby making a consideration of the agent's level of responsibility irrelevant.

The agented passive also, therefore, is characterized by the fact that the patient is more topical than the agent, with the caveat that when agent and patient both have about equal topical properties and the agent is furthermore not very agentive whereas the patient is inherently agentive, the patient is put in subject position.

This state of affairs then corroborates the notion that subjects are prototypically agents and topics. In a basic active sentence, when agent and topic do not coincide, agent wins out; passive is a way to let topic win out when designation of topicality is more important.

In this section we have also seen ways in which speakers can play with these basic notions. We have already mentioned that the Irresponsibility Passive is really a conventional use of the Transitory-Agent Passive which implies that considerations about the agent's responsibility are irrelevant. We also saw uses of "innocuous subjects." These are subjects which so patently do not fulfill the topic requirements that no one is tempted to attribute topicality to them. But their taking up the topic position par excellence prevents any other entity from being attributed topic properties. Or, there is no nominal topic property in the sentence and so this "innocuous subject" is used to fulfill the requirement that there be a subject without leading hearers on a false trail by inducing them to mistakenly attribute topicality to some entity. Examples we saw were sentences with indefinite people and someone in subject position, as well as sentences like those in 2 (page 279) and 10 (page 301), repeated here as 5 and 6, respectively:

5. JC:101

D: Uh, that's what re--, what really troubles me is, you know,
(1) will this thing not break some day and

P: Yeah.

D: the whole thing -- domino situation,

P: Yeah.

D: you know, they just, I think if it starts crumbling, fingers
will be pointing.

6. NSFM:162

And then I began to go out on speaking tours of organizing to
South Carolina, Savannah, all these places.

At the beginning, I knew some harsh words were going to be
said by the maids and the employers. A lot of the maids were
afraid to join. They were skeptical because they knew what
unions had done in the past, and at first "union" was part of
the name.

We also saw evidence to support the notion that pronouns have
prototype structure as well. Finally, we spent some time considering
the interaction of constructions and the relation of our findings here
to what people actually do. Both are fruitful areas for future
research. All I was able to do here with regards to the first problem
was to point out that it exists, that it is not trivial, and that a
consideration of the interaction of a construction with others is
necessary if one is to come to a full understanding of how that
construction works.

NOTES

- 1 I am reserving the terms "agentive" and "non-agentive" to refer to passives which could and could not have an agent in the sentence, respectively, following usage by Svartvik (1967) and Thompson (1982). For example, by this definition (i) would be agentive and (ii) would be non-agentive, though both are agentless,

- (i) John was arrested last night.
- (ii) John was drunk last night.

because in (i) you can add an agent by-phrase, as in (iii), and in (ii) you cannot, as is shown by the ungrammaticality of (iv):

- (iii) John was arrested by the police last night.
- (iv) *John was drunk by the police last night.

The division of passives into agentive and non-agentive types will be discussed again in section 2.

- 2 Rodino, 1974. Henceforth I will abbreviate this publication with "JC." The number following a colon will indicate the page on which the quotation is found. I will use the following abbreviations for speakers:

P: President Nixon
 D: John Dean
 H: Bob Haldeman
 E: John Ehrlichman

- 3 I.e., Seifer 1976, page 48. This is a book of oral histories of working-class American women. Only in one section is there an oral history of a man, the husband of one of the women. Unless otherwise noted, then, the passages are all spoken by women.

- 4 In a footnote, Hopper and Thompson (1980:252) say about these two symbols:

We follow Dixon 1979 in using 'A' (for Agent) and 'O' (for Object) to refer to the two participants in a two-participant clause. We make no claims about the grammatical relations that the NP arguments referring to these participants might bear to the verb. The term 'patient' refers to an O which is in fact the 'receiver' of the action in a cardinal transitive relationship.

The term 'A,' then, is not necessarily to be equated with "agents" as I discuss them in this work.

- 5 I would like to point out that the three categories Givón names starting on page 59 are not categories of reasons to use the passive but rather categories of the degree to which the unmentioned agent is recoverable from the context.
- 6 I am assuming that these transcripts are more accurate than the Bantam Edition of the White House Transcripts (edited by Gerald Gold of the New York Times; Bantam Books, Inc., New York), which was the version submitted to the Judiciary Committee by the Administration. There are four reasons for this: the Judiciary Committee had a vested interest in having them be accurate, whereas the White House did not; the Judiciary-Committee transcripts were made with much more care and time; and the Judiciary-Committee exhibits many more characteristics of spontaneous speech than the Bantam version, such as hesitations, false starts, and interruptions; and the Judiciary-Committee version is considerably longer than the Bantam version. False starts, hesitations, and interruptions are present in the Bantam version too, but not nearly to as great an extent.

The following versions of the same passage will give some idea of this. The first is the Bantam version; the second is the Judiciary-Committee version.

- (i) White House Transcripts, Bantam version, page 58:
- H: What has happened on the bug?
P: What bug?
D: The second bug there was a bug found in the telephone of one of the men at the DNC.
P: You don't think it was left over from the other time?
D: Absolutely not, the Bureau has checked and rechecked the whole place after that night. The man had specifically checked and re-checked the telephone and it was not there.
P: What the hell do you think was involved?
D: I think DNC was planted.
P: You think they did it?
D: Uh huh
P: (Expletive deleted)--do they really want to believe that we planted that?
- (ii) Judiciary-Committee version, page 3:
- H: What's happened on the bug?
P: Hard, hard to find-- on the what?
H: The bug.
D: The second bug. There was another bug found in the phone of, uh, the first--
P: You don't think it was one left over from the previous job?
D: We're-- absolutely not. The, the Bureau has, uh, checked and re-checked. The man who checked the phone

first said that his first check was thorough and it was not there in the instrument [clears throat] and that indeed it had to be planted after--

P: What the hell do you think is involved? What's your guess?

D: I think the DNC planted it, quite clearly.

P: You think they did it?

D: Uh huh.

P: Deliberately?

D: [Unintelligible]

P: Well, what in the name of Christ-- who do they think-- that anybody was-- They really [unintelligible] want to believe we planted that?

7 It is interesting that the Bantam version has Dean saying, before the President's statement that Johnson believed Bobby [Kennedy] bugged him, "I haven't heard but I wouldn't be--" thus going partway to corroborating my surmise by inserting the appropriate auxiliary.

8 The relation between an active sentence and the corresponding agentless passive is then similar to the relation between a single-lexical-item causative like kill and a periphrastic causative like cause to die (see Lakoff 1977:244f.): the prototypical assumptions hold for the active sentence, but not for the passive sentence.

9 This type of predicate is called passive rather than a case of psych-movement by both Postal (1971:43 *passim*) and Langacker (1982:78). Postal gives evidence of a syntactic nature distinguishing sentences like (i) and (ii) below:

(i) I am surprised at what you told me.

(ii) I am surprised by what you told me.

and argues that the evidence indicates that (ii) is a true passive and (i) is not -- leaving it susceptible to a construction like psych-movement. Certainly the evidence indicates that a sentence like (ii) contains a more active verb than a sentence like (i), which contains a more copular verb. Nevertheless, a sentence like (ii) or its active counterpart (iii)

(iii) What you told me surprises me.

is different from a regular passive in the first place because it contains no patient but rather an experiencer, in addition to the agentive element in the sentence; and in the second place because the most agentive element in the sentence is typically not human but rather inanimate. In regular passives the most agentive element can be inanimate, but typically is not.

10 Fragment 7 and its continuation are interesting because of the

fascinating mix of pronouns: they, she, you, I, we (inclusive) and we (exclusive), all fairly indefinite except for I. I give the continuation here for my readers' delectation. The inclusive first plural is here subscripted 'i' and the exclusive one is subscripted 'e':

(i) NSFM:170

...Maybe one or two black women, but no poor women. You can't talk about women's rights until we include all

ⁱ
women. When you deny one woman of her rights, you deny all. I'm getting tired of going to those meetings, because there's none of us participating.

^e

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Prototypical Subjects

"It's prototypes all the way down."

Our principal conclusion, stated too briefly, is the following:

Subject is both a meaning-based and a grammaticized category.

The English subject category is a natural category centered around a prototype, and the prototypical instances of subjects can be predicted purely on the basis of meaning. A subject is a prototypical instance of the subject category when it both codes the primary of the clause, that is, the case in the basic case frame of the verb that is highest on the case hierarchy, and it is the sentence topic, that is, the manifestation in the sentence of a Representor of a discourse topic. However, as would be expected from the theory of natural categorization, a prototype-based category has both prototypical and nonprototypical cases (once one knows the structure of the special construction), where the nonprototypical cases are conventional extensions of the prototypical ones. In the syntax of a language, "conventional" means "grammaticized." So although the category of subject in English is motivated by semantic and pragmatic considerations, that is, considerations of primariness and topichood respectively, the category

of subject is also grammaticized in the ways in which it accounts for nonprototypical occurrences of primary and topic in sentences. When primary and topic do not overlap, then the choice of subject can no longer be predicted solely on the basis of meaning; and then the processes of grammaticization take over. Similarly, the ways of dealing with cases where either the topic or the primary is nonprototypical are also grammaticized. These sentences then have a double layer of grammaticization.

This grammaticization thus manifests itself in three areas with respect to subjecthood:

1. in nonprototypical instances of basic sentences, accounting for the gradual fading-off of grammaticality
2. in the definition of subject within each special construction
3. in nonprototypical instances of special constructions, accounting for the gradual fading-off of grammaticality.

In special constructions just as for the basic sentence type, the subject choice can be predicted in the prototypical cases, that is, where the subject prototype for that construction obtains; but the criteria for extending the prototype to nonprototypical instances are conventionalized, that is, grammaticized.

Although grammaticization is evident with the definition of the subject within a special construction, nevertheless the the definition of the subject within a special construction is not arbitrary even

though it is also not predicted. The meaning of the subject of a special construction is motivated by the meaning of the subject in a prototypical basic sentence. Thus, whereas in the prototypical basic sentence the subject is a prototypical sentence topic and a prototypical primary, the subject of a prototypical passive sentence is only a topic, and not an agent (or at least, not the entity which is responsible for the occurrence of the action of the predicate) -- and it is important to mark the fact that the agent is not the topic. In the prototypical case, the subject is clearly the sentence topic, as in the following example, already discussed in chapter 5 (more context is given in 4 on page 250):

1. At the beginning I went along with it, because I knew I needed a group behind me or I would not be recognized by the city.

In less prototypical cases, the subject is merely more topical than the agent, for example in 5 on page 233, where more context is given:

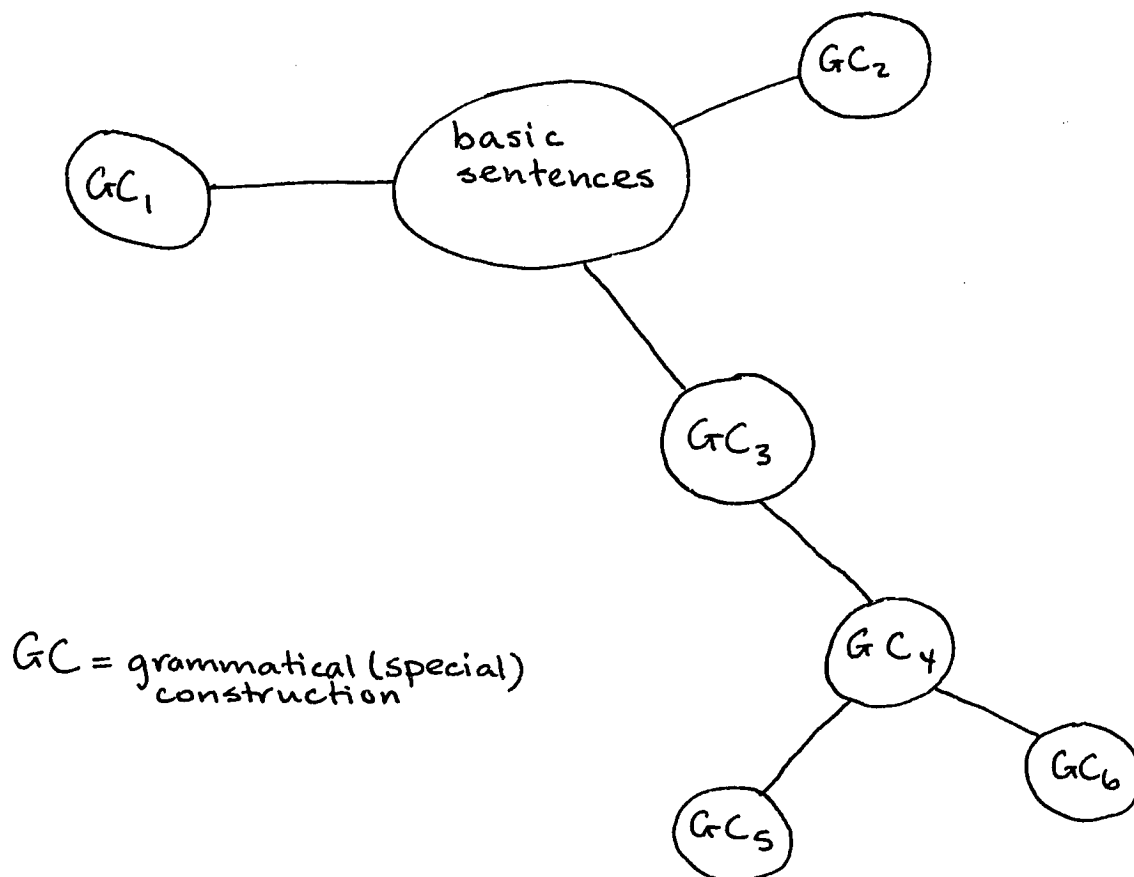
- 2 D: the two former White House people, low level, indicted, one consultant and one member of the Domestic Council staff.
That's not very much of a tie.
H: No.
P: Well, their names have been already mentioned.

The names of the two former White House people are more topical than the general agents which did the mentioning because the bearers of the names are the Representors of the scene which is a discourse topic in the conversation. The least prototypical case as far as topicality is concerned is a passive with an "innocuous subject," as in 6 on page 312, where more context is given:

3. At the beginning, I knew some harsh words were going to be said by the maids and the employers.

The use of "innocuous subjects" is a clear case of a speaker exploiting a grammaticized form for a purpose which is clearly not prototypical (since it is unlikely that some harsh words would be a sentence topic, certainly in this context and probably in most contexts) to signal a nonprototypical use -- in this case, a Janus sentence.

The view that emerges about the way the constructions of a language are organized together into a language, can be sketched in the following way (this is a hypothetical sketch):



Each of the points on the chain represents a prototype, with nonprototypical examples deviating out from it. At the center lies the basic-sentence construction. The special constructions deviate from it in greater or lesser ways, but are always motivated by it so that only the deviations have to be mentioned in a description of the special construction. We did this implicitly in our previous discussions of the special constructions. To give an extreme example, it is never necessary, when describing a special construction, to mention that the subject agrees in person and number with the verb, or that there were a subject and a verb in the construction in question, because in these ways (and others) all the constructions were the same as basic sentences. This theory holds that the reason the special constructions have these and other characteristics in common with basic sentences is that the basic-sentence construction motivates these aspects of the structure of the special constructions. Or, for example, the form of the "focus" of the it-cleft must follow the form of a basic copular sentence and the "presupposition" (see section 3.2 for a discussion of these terms) must follow the form of a normal relative complement: the structure of the it-cleft is motivated by the structure of basic sentences and normal relative complements.

Some special constructions deviate more from the prototypical basic-sentence construction than others, and some deviate from the basic-sentence construction via another construction, creating a chain of constructions. Thus, in the diagram above, GC4 deviates from the basic-sentence construction via GC3. The structure of GC3 is motivated by the basic-sentence construction, and the structure of GC4 is

motivated by GC3, and thus also by the basic-sentence construction, but indirectly. For example, there are various passive (sub)constructions which form a chain of constructions (see Van Oosten 1983), such as for example the agentless agentive passive, the agented agentive passive, a final-state agentive passive, and various types of non-agentive passives (see Svartvik 1966, Langacker 1982 and chapter 5 above for the uses of these terms). Similarly, it is very likely that the property-factoring constructions discussed in sections 3.3 and 4.3 above will also form a chain in which one will be motivated by another one which in its turn is motivated by the basic-sentence construction. Another example is the truncations. We have discussed truncated PsychPF sentences and truncated ChangePF sentences in Chapter 1 of this dissertation (pages 22f.) and truncated Tough-construction sentences in footnote 11 on page 200.

Subjects, also, form a chain like the one in the diagram above as regards their meaning, with the subjects of basic sentences at the center and the subjects of special constructions radiating out from the center. Again, each point on the chain represents a prototype meaning for subject in the construction in question, each of which has nonprototypical meanings radiating out from it. And again, the meaning of the nonprototypical subjects is motivated by the meaning of the basic-sentence subjects. The situation with English subjects is then very similar to that with English prepositions like over, studied by Brugman (1981).

This theory is able to clarify what is right about each of the

opposing claims of Bates and MacWhinney (1982:204) and Foley and Van Valin (1980:340f.). Bates and MacWhinney claim that agency dominates topichood in subject assignment in English (1982:204):

English merges agent and topic in most cases, capitalizing on the role of perspective in creating a statistical overlap between these two categories. When the overlap does break down, agency is more likely to dominate in assignment of subjectivalization.

Foley and Van Valin (1980), on the other hand, hold that in "reference-dominated" languages, of which English is one, topichood considerations prevail, and in fact they seem to claim that the subject in English can be equated with the "pragmatic peak," the "pragmatically most salient NP in a clause," an interaction of "discourse prominence (i.e. definiteness, specificity, and givenness), on the one hand, and what Zubin (1979) calls the speaker's 'focus of interest,' on the other." (Foley and Van Valin 1980:338, 339; both are aspects of my notion of 'topic'). They base this assessment on the fact that English has ways of varying the subject, such as passive, while the role assignment remains the same, whereas it has few ways of varying role assignment (the Patient-Subject Construction and the Tough-Construction are two).

These two points of view appear to be diametrically opposed to each other but my theory of subjecthood makes it possible to show that each is true to some extent, and what it is about each that is true. In basic sentences, as was pointed out in the Introduction, the prototypicality of the primary is more central than the prototypicality of the topic. This is what is true of Bates and MacWhinney's formulation: when the primary and the sentence topic do not overlap in a

basic sentence, the primary is assigned the subject role.

What Foley and Van Valin noticed, on the other hand, was that English had many constructions signalling a deviation from the prototypical topic (pragmatic peak), or signalling a deviation from the normal assignment of pragmatic peak to the primary of the sentence. In this dissertation we have discussed existentials and it-clefts, which signal a deviation from the prototypical topic; and the Tough-Construction, passive and the property-factorings which signal a deviation from the normal assignment of pragmatic peak to the primary of the sentence. (Patient subjects are a variation on this second type of deviation.)

So Bates and MacWhinney are right in that in basic sentences primary wins out over topic in subject assignment; but Foley and Van Valin are right in that most special constructions in English exist in order to vary the assignment of topic (pragmatic peak) from the primary to something else. My theory also shows the relation between these two opposing claims: the reason that most special constructions vary the pragmatic peak is that the basic sentence type adequately represents the primary.

Not only do subjects have prototype structure, but the two elements that make up subjects, topics and primaries -- that is, the individual case roles -- also have prototype structure. The prototypical topic, as we saw in Chapter 2, has the following characteristics (see Section 2.2):

- the prototypical topic is what the speaker is talking about
- the prototypical topic is the focus of the speaker's attention
- the prototypical topic is also the focus of the hearer's attention
- the prototypical topic is the focus of the speaker's interest
- the speaker takes the perspective of the prototypical topic
- the prototypical topic is concrete, visible, and present in the speaker's immediate environment
- the prototypical topic is also present in the hearer's immediate environment
- the reflex of the prototypical topic in the sentence is referential and definite
- the prototypical topic is the primary of the sentence (preferentially the primary is an agent)
- the prototypical topic is a basic-level topic (see Section 2.1)
- the prototypical topic is a salient participant in a discourse-topic schema or scene, and a human being

The central characteristics of topics are that the topic is what the speaker is talking about and is the focus of the speaker's attention. When the topic of a sentence does not have some of the peripheral characteristics, it begins to deviate from the prototype. For some deviations, there is almost no penalty. For example, if the topic is not concrete and present in the speaker's and hearer's environment, speakers can deal with this almost as well as they deal with the prototypical case. Constructions do take account of this aspect, however, in terms of pronoun use, etc. For other deviations, however, there are more severe consequences; at the least, a special construction may have to be used. For example, if the topic is not the focus of the hearer's attention, then the speaker may choose to use an existential to bring it to the hearer's attention as topic.

The situation with prototypical primaries is somewhat different in that the term 'primary' is a cover term for a number of prototypes: agent, experiencer, patient, etc. So the term 'prototypical primary' means 'prototypical agent or prototypical experiencer or prototypical

patient or ...' In this dissertation I have only looked at prototypical agents. It seems that the central characteristic of the prototypical agent is that it has the primary responsibility for the occurrence of the action of the predicate. This was the characteristic that remained when other characteristics, even humanness, faded, for example, in patient-subject sentences, discussed in section 4.1, or in Tough-Construction sentences, discussed in section 4.2:

- 4a. This wine drinks like it was water.
- b. This wine is tough to leave alone.

In each case the sentence asserts that there is something about the wine which is responsible for the action of the predicate. A less central but still fairly central characteristic of agents is that they have the intention of bringing the action of the predicate about. This has as a consequence that the agent must be human, since only humans can have intentionality (barring anthropomorphism) in most situations.

It is very likely that the characteristics comprising the prototypical agent and topic also have prototype structure. For example, although higher animals can have intentionality, it is probable that the prototypical kind of intentionality is the intentionality that only humans can exhibit. To paraphrase John Robert Ross (1967): "It's prototypes all the way down."

We have seen in passing, in section 5.5, that pronouns also exhibit prototype structure. This is more evidence that prototypes are indeed ubiquitous in language.

Directions for Future Research

The study reported in this dissertation is incomplete. I would like to see further research in the following directions:

1. The structure of a construction category. We have determined the prototype of a number of categories in this dissertation, but we have only made a start at investigating deviations from the prototype. In what way(s) can a member of a construction category deviate from the prototype and still be considered a member of the category? Are there regularities in the ways different members of a category can deviate from the prototype of the category?
2. The interactions between constructions. How do the requirements of the different constructions mesh and interact? A start has been made on this problem in Section 5.6, but the question is worth looking into systematically.
3. The ecology of a language, discussed in chapter 2. How do the different constructions of a language work together to accomplish the communication requirements that other languages do with another set of constructions?
4. The notion of a universal prototype for topics and subjects. Is it tenable?

This dissertation has, I believe, made clear the problems to be expected in such endeavors. A clarification of the problems is an important step to their solution.

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