

(high in Ute in that no restrictions occur, whereas in English only the OBJ and in German occasionally also the LOC is affected: *Auf dem Tisch wurde getanzt*; but cf. *Es wurde auf dem Tisch getanzt*, where *es* assumes the SUBJ position and thus the heavy transposition of LOC into TOPIC is avoided).<sup>1</sup>

Now, these scalar typological dimensions interact on the basis of interdependencies in such a way that one big continuum results which represents the dimension of passivization. The parameter correlations are based upon the relation of the first parameter (viz. TOPIC assignment) to the two others (cf. Givón 1981:169):

The less a language assigns SUBJ/AG marking to the TOPIC in the passive, the more its passive sentences

- (a) will tend to delete the AG of the active (a-b),
- (b) will keep transitive and active features (a-c),
- (c) will accept non-SUBJ non-AG participants as their TOPICS (a-d).

### 3. Transitivity

The original meaning of the word 'transitive' is 'going through, going over'. We are focussing on the participle as an event or action represented

<sup>1</sup> The German sentences mean something like 'there was (someone) dancing on the table', 'dancing was carried out on the table', and not 'it was danced on the table', because here 'it' would refer to a kind of dance, say, 'tap' or 'fox trot'. [T]

by a predicator which, in its turn, is represented by a verb. The abovesaid 'going over', as specified by the verb, takes place from one participant to another. More generally, transitivity is the construction of a relation which relates a starting-point via the participle to an endpoint. The following hypothesis looks likely:

**Hypothesis.** The participle must be of such a kind (the verb must have such semantic and morpho-syntactic features) that a 'going over' is plausible. Starting-point and endpoint are quite close to the action/event. Once the participants are established as starting-point and endpoint, it is both their distance from the participle and their mutual relations which decide both the degree and the nature of transitivity.

Tradition has it that transitive verbs are those which require a DO. This view is maintained by Transformational Grammar. According to Chomsky (1965), the strict subcategorization of verbs belongs to the base and is found in the lexicon; it is there that verbs divide into transitives and intransitives.  $V_{tr}$  are those which occur with an OBJ-NP and  $V_{itr}$  are those which do not. The following example illustrates Chomsky's idea:

(18) Strict subcategorization of *grow*:

[+V, +\_\_NP, +\_\_, +\_\_Adj]

- a. John grew a beard
- b. John grew
- c. John grew sad

According to the above criterium, however, one and the same verb happens to be both transitive, as in (18a), and intransitive, as in (18b-c). If now passivization is adduced as a further criterium for transitivity, then it fails for (18) and even more for (18a):

- (19)
- a. \* A beard was grown (by John)
  - b. \* Was grown (by John)
  - c. \* Sad was grown (by John)

The negative result of applying the passivization test shows that the definition of a transitive verb as one which occurs in the environment of an OBJ-NP is not always correct and therefore has to be corrected.

According to Hopper/Thompson 1980, transitivity is a multi-factorial concept which cannot be reduced to one criterium. Thus the presence of an OBJ-NP is only one factor which points to, but does not constitute, transitivity - in case the remaining tests should be negative.

Transitivity is a gradual continuum (from low to high) which, in the process of communication, strongly correlates with the distinction foregrounding vs. backgrounding, i.e. high transitivity indicates foregrounding and low transitivity indicates backgrounding. The 'figure' consists typically of a sequence of events and/or changes of state or place; the 'ground' offers a scenario, consisting of descriptions, valuations, etc. which are often not ordered in time nor do they need to be.

In addition, simultaneous encoding, i.e. morphosyntactic and semantic options which co-vary with high/low transitivity, may be observed. Parameters which indicate high transitivity occur together, and so do those indicating low transitivity (cf. Hopper/Thompson 1980:252). Since Hopper/Thompson restrict their observations to the narrative genre, the question arises whether their results also apply, say, to conversation. One may also object to the absence of an analysis of interdependence and weighting of parameters.

Hopper/Thompson's factor J, i.e. "Individuation of O", deserves special attention. This factor consists of a set of correlating features, e.g. definiteness, referentiality, animacy, etc. The above considerations will be illustrated on the basis of this factor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Most examples in this section were taken from Hopper/Thompson (1980). The number which follows an example corresponds to that paper.

- (20) a. Busco mi sombrero 'I seek my hat'  
SPA  
b. Busco a mi amigo 'I seek my friend' (11)

An animated (human) object requires special morphosyntactic marking, which shows the reality of the above features.

- (21) a. Na'e kai 'e Sione 'a e ika  
TONG PAST eat ERG John ABS DEF fish  
'John ate the fish'  
b. Na'e kai ika 'a Sione  
PAST eat fish ABS John  
'John ate fish' (19)

In (21a) a referential, definite OBJ correlates with an AG in ERG, a fact that points to high transitivity and thus confirms the hypothesis of simultaneous encoding.

In (21b) A is marked by the ABS, like an intransitive construction. In correlation to this we find an indefinite OBJ 'fish', which is closer - i.e. incorporated - to the verb thus indicating low transitivity.

- (22) a. Tung-e na-nt'wat-ən kupre-n  
CHUK friends-ERG set-TRANS net-ABS  
'The friends set the net'  
b. Tung-ət kopra-ntəwat-g'at  
friends-NOM net-set-INTR  
'The friends set nets' (16)

Indices for high transitivity in (22a) are:

- (a) Ergative case-marking on the AG  
(b) Absolutive case-marking on the OBJ  
(c) Independence of verb and O (separated words).

Indices for low transitivity in (22b) are:

- (a) Nominative case-marking on the A  
(b) Preverbal incorporation of O into the verb (in (22a) O is postverbal)  
(c) Intransitive marking on the verb

The features of both examples co-vary and they converge in higher vs. lower transitivity.

Hungarian has a subjective vs. an objective conjugation which, according to Hopper/Thompson, should be interpreted as intransitive vs. transitive.

- (23) a. A szél fúj 'The wind blows' (22a)  
HUNG  
b. A szél levelet fúj 'The wind leaf-blows'  
c. A szél fújja a levelet  
'The wind blows the leaf' (22b)

The subjective verb conjugation correlates with intransitive and the objective one with transitive case-marking. The subjective verb conjugation, when used in two-participant sentences, correlates with a 'transdefinite' OBJ, i.e. with an OBJ which is unspecified with respect to definiteness. Hopper/Thompson's parameter J - "Individuation of O" - leads to a

new conception of indirect objects. Tradition considers them as not directly touched by the action. They are also inaccessible to certain syntactic operations which apply to direct objects. Hopper/Thompson direct our attention to the fact that indirect objects - because of their tendency to definiteness and animacy - contribute more to transitivity than do direct objects. This is reflected in languages like English through the so-called "dative-movement", by which the IO is brought beside the verb, into the natural DO position, so as to emphasize its referentiality:

- (24) a. Clara wrote a letter to Santa Claus  
 b. Clara wrote Santa Claus a letter (27)

A further O-parameter is the total vs. partial affectedness of O (parameter I). In Finnish this opposition correlates with an aspectual one (telic vs. atelic) which is expressed by the case opposition accusative vs. partitive:

- (25) a. Liikemies kirjoitti kirjeen valiokunnalle  
 FIN businessman wrote letter(ACC) committee-to  
 'The businessmn wrote a letter to the committe'  
 b. Liikemies kirjoitti kirjettä valiskunnalle  
 businessman wrote letter(PART) committee-to  
 'The businessman was writing a letter to the committee' (33)

An OBJ in the partitive implies that the action has not attained its goal.

Convergences with respect to higher/lower transitivity on the basis of co-varying morphosyntactic options, which illuminate the connexion between aspect and O-affectedness, can also be established for Hungarian.

- (26) a. János festék-et fújta a fal-ra  
 Janos paint-OBJ sprayed the wall-on  
 'Janos sprayed paint on the wall'  
 b. János be-fújta a fal-at festék-kel  
 Janos PERF-sprayed the wall-ACC paint-with  
 'Janos sprayed the wall with paint' (35)

In (26b) we have again the "objective" conjugation (-a) which can only be used in highly transitive sentences (cf. (23)); the perfective prefix indicates completion of the action and O occurs in the canonical position after the verb and has the corresponding case-marking. Again, in (26a) the subjective, and that means "intransitive", conjugation is correlated with the absence of a Perfective prefix, with the assignment of a local case to the partially affected O, and with a transdefinite DO.

To sum up, there are several criteria which determine the individuation of O: definite vs. indefinite, referential vs. nonreferential, animate vs. inanimate, and - if we want to subsume this distinction under individuation -

total vs. partial (affectedness). The question arises whether all these factors have the same value. The most important seems to be definiteness/referentiality, because it plays a unique role in communication (one must know to which object O refers) and because the other factors - at least as far as grammaticalization is concerned - never occur independently of this one (thus they never substitute it) but always together with it (cf. Hopper/Thompson 1980:288).

Many languages associate indefinite Os with intransitive structures. Their status as not-quite-objects, i.e. as more or less adverbial complements, is thereby confirmed, if we follow Hopper/Thompson (1980:290f.). In this they explicitly oppose Comrie (1981a), who believes Os to be typically [-animate] and [-definite], whereas SUBJ/AGs are positively specified as to these features. According to Comrie, a special O-marker, say for instance definiteness, occurs if and only if O deviates from the norm in this respect and the prototypical A-O relation is thus disturbed (and confusion becomes possible). Against him, Hopper/Thompson maintain that definiteness is an indicator of 'foreground'. Their hypothesis (viz. that only definite Os are objects proper) may, however, be fallacious.

Now, how do we recognize transitivity? Instead of just listing criteria, after the fashion of Hopper/Thompson, we should look for a concept. The relation between participants and participle (usually an event) is described as a relation of distance:

- (a) Either is one participant implied in the event:  
S - participle + O (incorporation)
- (b) Or the participle faces participants on equal terms:  
A - participle - O
- (c) Or else one participant is farther away from the participle:  
A - participle - Adv (i.e. oblique case)

Besides parameter H ("agency"), which has to do with the differences in the control exerted by A upon the action (cf. *George startled me* vs. *The picture startled me*), all other parameters (B-G) concern the quality of the event: kinesis, aspect, punctuality, volitionality, affirmation, mode. Let us briefly illustrate two of these parameters.

Samoan encodes punctuality through the opposition between ergative and antipassive constructions.

- (27) a. Sā manatu le tama i le teine  
SAM TNS think the boy OBL the girl  
  
'The boy thought about the girl'
- b. Sā manatu-a le teine e le tama  
TNS think-TRANS the girl ERG the boy  
  
'The boy remembered the girl' (52)

Sentence (27a) denotes a durative action and (27b) a punctual one. In the former, A (viz. *le*

*tama* 'the boy') appears in the unmarked ABS and O (viz. *le teine* 'the girl') is assigned an oblique role by the particle *i*. In the latter, A is in the ERG (indicated by the preposition *e*) and O is brought beside the verb which in turn receives a transitive suffix *-a*.

This example embodies the typical correlation of high transitivity indices with (canonical) ergative sentences on the one hand, and of low transitivity indices with antipassive sentences on the other hand (cf. Hopper/Thompson 1980:268):

Ergative	Antipassive
The verb encodes two participants	The verb encodes only one participant
Perfective aspect	Imperfective aspect
Total affectedness of O	Partial affectedness of O
Definite O	Indefinite O
Kinetic/volitional verb	Static/nonvolitional verb
Active participation of A	Passive participation of A

Incidentally, it should be noted that Samoan verbs divide into active and stative ones and that the latter tend to appear in nonergative, i.e. antipassive constructions.

The relation between aspect and transitivity has been illustrated in Finnish (cf. (25) above). In many languages ergative constructions are limited to perfective (or generally to past) constructions (e.g. in Hindi, cf. Hopper/Thompson 1980:271f.), whereas nonergative constructions are used in imperfective (or non-past) contexts. Samoan ergative constructions

denote perfectivity and antipassive ones denote imperfectivity:

- (28) a. Na va'ai le tama i le i'a  
TNS look-at the boy OBL the fish

'The boy was looking at the fish' [antipassive version]

- b. Na va'ai-a e le tama le i'a  
TNS look-at ERG the boy the fish

'The boy spotted the fish' [ergative version, (66)]