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Aufsätze

Transparent versus Functional Encoding of Grammatical Relations: a Parameter for Syntactic Change and Typology

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I

I assume that there are two major principles underlying the various systems of encoding grammatical relations (GR's) such as (transitive/intransitive) subject, direct, indirect, oblique (or adverbial) object, and attribute.

According to the *Functional Principle*, the only purpose relational coding ought to achieve is to overtly distinguish the different GR's co-present in actual (mono- and poly-clausal) sentences, no matter how systematically or consistently. The *Functional Principle*, requiring only minimally distinctive relational coding, helps avoid relational ambiguities in a maximally economical manner, without insisting on a consistent identification of semantic roles (such as agent, patient, experiencer, stimulus, possessor, possession, instrument, local or temporal setting) by the coding devices, at least if the co-present GR's can be told apart, and their corresponding semantic roles can be recovered, without clues from the relational-coding system. Phenomena rightly thought to be motivated by the *Functional Principle* include (1) differential subject-object marking on an optional basis (that is, distinctive marking only if the subject NP, for semantic and/or pragmatic reasons, could otherwise be taken for the object, and vice versa), (2) the patterning of intransitive subjects with transitive subjects in some languages and with transitive objects in others, as long as these associations have no obvious semantic or pragmatic rationale, (3) nominative object marking in subject-deprived (e.g. imperative) transitive clauses in some languages,

(4) the memberships of nouns from separate semantic classes in separate, not equally distinctive declension classes.

The *Transparency Principle* also prevents relational ambiguity, but less economically, favouring maximal distinctiveness, and simultaneously consistent role identification, instead. In relational-coding systems in accordance with the Transparency Principle, distinctions of GR-encoding ought to correspond to, or at least approach, the semantic-role distinctions relevant in the language concerned, with each semantic role ideally encoded differently, but in a consistent manner, no matter how many and which GR's/roles are co-present in an actual sentence. Of course, if separate semantic roles are not only coded distinctively in perfect agreement with the Transparency Principle, but in addition exhibit fully distinctive syntactic behaviour, one may rightly wonder how genuinely grammatical (as distinct from semantic) relations come about in the first place.

These two principles, Functionality and Transparency, need not be absolutely incompatible within individual languages; but no doubt languages differ as to which of them they predominantly utilise, overall or for particular GR's. What remains to be explored are eventual generalisations about the intra-language and cross-linguistic distributions of the respective domains of the two principles. For instance, there might be cross-linguistic preferences for particular GR's (viz. core GR's such as subject and direct object, where definable) to be encoded functionally rather than transparently, while other GR's (viz. the peripheral ones, including all oblique/adverbial objects, and also attributes, none of which are bound by the valency of predicates/heads) might tend to encode transparently rather than functionally. And there might be various kinds of correlations between preferred or permitted degrees of transparency and the particular devices used to code a GR, including (1) case marking, perhaps accompanied by patterns of segmental and suprasegmental modification, (2) marking by separate function words (adpositions), (3) marking by bound pronominal affixes or clitics (agreement/cross-reference), (4) word-class categorisation of lexical contentives, and (5) linear constituent ordering, and combinations of these. For instance, does linear-order coding admit of, or invite, more opacity than case marking and agreement/cross-reference, which in turn are less transparent than adpositional coding or word-class categorisations? And if so, why?

If languages may differ as to which of the two principles they predominantly utilise, it is plausible to expect that a language may also change from predominantly using one principle to favouring the antagonistic principle. A priori, the expectation thus is that transparent relational-coding systems can become (partly or totally) opaque, thereby gaining functional motivation, and vice versa. And in fact, it seems that neither direction of this kind of change is to be excluded on theoretical grounds, as a brief look at three developments in English and German, all pertaining to the subject relation, and a parenthetic side-glance at Modern Icelandic, demonstrate.

The three developments whose common denominator is an antagonism between Functionality and Transparency are (1) the gradual loss in Middle English of impersonal, subjectless sentence constructions so common in Old English (with which we briefly compare a case-marking shift in the corresponding constructions in Icelandic); (2) the extension in Ozark English of a non-passive construction type supplementing the active-passive opposition, coupled with a revaluation of the semantics of transitivity; and (3) the tendency to avoid a certain kind of holistic construction with the local setting as subject in Modern German. Here are summary accounts of these changes, highlighting only what seems essential for the present perspective without dwelling on descriptive details.

As is well known, relational coding in Old and early Middle English, relying on case-marking in conjunction with agreement, was semantically quite transparent in so far as agents had a privilege to subjecthood, and concomitant nominative encoding and verb-agreement, in basic constructions, whereas experiencers regularly could not attain this status and coding even when there was no other semantic role present. Typical constructions with experiencers, thus, have dative or accusative encoding of this semantic role, no verb-agreement with this role nor with the stimulus role when it is encoded prepositionally (thus: *Him/hine hyngrede; Me angers earnestly at Arthures knyghtez*), or, alternatively, verb-agreement with the stimulus when that role is in the nominative (thus: *þam cyng licodon peran*). Linear order at that stage does not primarily code grammatical, nor semantic, relations, but pragmatic status (topicality), and in this respect experiencers closely resemble agents, and therefore commonly precede verbs and the co-present role of stimulus. To be sure, a few impersonal, subjectless predicates also allowed personal constructions with the experiencer as nominatively marked subject quite early (thus: *Hie hyngriþ & ȝystraþ; Se ȝe hine sceamað*), but the large-scale abolishment of impersonal, subjectless constructions with experiencers occurred only later in Middle English, concomitantly with the replacement of synthetic GR-coding (especially case) by analytic coding (especially linear order). The former objects of monovalent predicates of experience could now freely attain the status of subjects, with the case, agreement, and order coding and syntactic behaviour appropriate to this GR (*He was hungry; He was angry (with/at/about somebody/something)*), as could former experiencer objects of bivalent verbs, on account of a subject-object switch of their two core actants (*The king liked pears*). There certainly remain relics with experiencers barred from subjecthood (*Something happened to me/*I happened something; He angers everybody/It angers me when ...*); but even with these predicates, there often are non-basic constructions with experiencer subjects (*He happened to be hungry*) – or some of these modern constructions with the experiencer as object in fact might be non-basic constructions in the first place (especially those with dummy subjects and Psych-Movement constructions such as *Bloggs strikes me as a fool*). Disregarding questions of historical causation, the conclusion is obvious that the GR of subject, and the devices encoding it, which were formerly relatively

transparent with respect to the semantic-role distinction between agent and experiencer, have become relatively opaque, though functionally simpler, in this respect. To specify the semantic content of the GR of subject, it seems that one now has to refer to a classification of actants in terms of their degrees of individuation (or animacy, personality or similar concepts), rather than to the semantic-role dichotomy between agents and experiencers. One might speculate that this particular result of the competition between Transparency and Functionality, viz. the relative loss in transparency of English subjects, had to do with the exchange of the predominant GR-coding devices. As long as linear order was not strictly relationally, but pragmatically determined, topical non-subject experiencers could easily appear in initial position, just like topical agent subjects, without interfering with the relational-coding system proper (case-marking and agreement); but as soon as initial position was used to encode subjects, linear order having acquired relational significance and now operating in conjunction with agreement, experiencer topics automatically had to become subjects, on a par with agent subjects, in order to maintain their pragmatically privileged status vis-à-vis not-so-topicworthy stimulus actants without upsetting the relational system.

May we, then, conclude with the generalisation, so far based on this single case, that in the end the Functional Principle always wins out as far as the coding (and, perhaps, syntactic behaviour) of subjects is concerned, in particular if languages do not predominantly use synthetic coding? This generalisation does not strike me as utterly implausible – with an important proviso, though: it seems to be only the transparency of the agent-experiencer distinction that tends to be affected by the Functional Principle under such circumstances. A language whose subject relation is semantically more or less opaque with respect to subtler agentivity distinctions, and whose major means of encoding that GR is, and continues to be, linear order, may well be able to increase, rather than decrease, its relational transparency. The change from Standard (American) English to Ozark English, to be dealt with presently, is a case in point. But in fact even the agent-experiencer distinction, under circumstances not very different from those obtaining in Middle English, may happen diachronically to gain in transparency, at least quantitatively and perhaps benefitting from an increasingly strong insistence on marking off experiencers from all other semantic roles (including agents) – which suggests that the proposed generalisation about (agent etc. –) experiencer transparency being doomed to yield to the Functional Principle requires further modifications. Some such development, with experiencer transparency gaining, and occasionally re-gaining, some ground vis-à-vis Functionality, actually seems to be taking place in Modern Icelandic, much lamented by normative grammarians (see KOSSUTH 1978). The offence of 'dative-sick' Icelanders simply was, and apparently continues to be, their tendency to extend the use of dative case-marking for experiencers to verbs, impersonal but also personal ones, which previously had been accompanied by accusative- or nominative-marked experiencers, thereby decreasing, quantitatively rather than categorically, the semantic opacity of accusative and nominative case marking (which, to be sure, has never been entirely opaque in the first place, on account of the traditional dative-marking preferences

of experiencers). What makes this development really remarkable is that it is confined to case marking: otherwise, and in particular with regard to their syntactic behaviour (e.g. as controllers of reflexivisation, coreferential subject deletion, and verb as well as reflexive-adjective agreement), experiencers are simultaneously being aligned with agents, the traditionally privileged occupants of the subject relation in basic constructions, in a process that is destined to lead eventually to the demise of impersonal subjectless constructions, the characteristic domain of experiencers, in a manner familiar from the history of English and other, not only Germanic, languages. Turning now to the triumph of Transparency in Ozark English (see FOSTER 1979 for details), the relevant semantic parameter is not the agent-experiencer distinction, but has to do with whether or not an agent, or causal agency, is wilfully responsible for the outcome of an event; the relevant GR is that of transitive subject. Examples such as *Bloggs opened the door (with a key)*, *A key opened the door*, *The door opened (with a key)* demonstrate that Standard English hardly ever excludes non-agents (patients, instruments, other accessories) from subject status in basic non-passive clauses. Ozarkers, however, seem to have developed a constraint against transitive subjects not referring to wilfully responsible agents (thus, in Ozark English: **A key opened the door*; **A rockslide sank the canoe*; **A heart-attack killed Uncle Charlie*), and perhaps also against passive *by*-phrases of the same semantic kind (**The canoe got/was sunk by the rockslide*). These anti-opacity constraints can even be strengthened so as to make agents obligatory sentence constituents if the event reported indeed required a wilfully responsible participant ('Täterverschweigung', thus, is not a communicative strategy favoured by Ozark cultural norms!), and in fact to absolutely oblige speakers to construe wilfully responsible agents in the GR of transitive subject, at the expense of full passives. Apparently, Ozark relational grammar has no further pertinent constraint on subjectivisation, and, in particular, seems to have dropped the peripheral transparency requirement in Standard English that a patient cannot be chosen as subject of a non-passive clause containing an agent as well (**The door opened by Bloggs*). This gives rise to constructions like *Mary Sue's dress tore by/because of Billy*, *He plays with by that little girl 'bout every day*, *The canoe sank from the rockslide*, *Milk don't drink not only by babies but by grown-ups too* in Ozark, used especially if none of the participants mentioned is considered wilfully responsible. This construction type is also available in Standard English with some predicates (e.g. *Uncle Charlie died from a heart-attack*; *The mill runs by water*), and is also used preferably if the agent-patient configuration is not exactly prototypical, with the causal agency lacking wilful responsibility. To sum up this summary: The GR of transitive subject is semantically more transparent in Ozark English than in Standard English, the crucial semantic distinction being that of wilful responsibility. Previously, our notion of transparency was defined in terms of customary semantic roles such as agent and patient; but our comparison between Ozark and Standard English suggests that some modification, or extension, of this notion may be in order, to take care of potentially significant relationships between GR's and semantic properties of participants such as volition, responsibility, and control (which, to be sure, proto-

typically coincide in agents, but nevertheless do so contingently rather than of necessity). If transitive subject has, thus, become a semantically more transparent GR in Ozark English, Transparency has asserted itself against Functionality without attendant changes in relational coding, which also sets apart this development from the opacity-increasing Middle English one dealt with first. (Occasional divergences of Ozark agreement morphology from Standard English are certainly negligible in this respect, linear order being the dominant subject coding device in both varieties.) Modern German admits local-setting subjects much less readily than Modern English (compare *Berlin will again be very hot*/**Berlin wird wieder ziemlich heiß sein*; *Scotland will stay cloudy and cool*/?*Schottland bleibt bewölkt und kühl*; *This tent sleeps two to eight persons*/**Dieses Zelt schläft zwei bis acht Leute*; *Lake Constance prohibits submarines*/**Der Bodensee verbietet U-Boote*; see ROHDENBURG 1974 for details). Nevertheless, the GR of subject, in most varieties of contemporary German, is not entirely transparent with respect to the distinction between local setting and other semantic roles: a number of predicates, though clearly fewer than in English, may appear in non-basic (though active) holistic constructions, with nominatively coded local-setting subjects and the co-present role (agent or patient, depending on the verb) marked adpositionally (*von/vor/voll(er)*). The constraint against subjects referring to fully occupied local settings in fact seems to have been tightened considerably during the New High German period; the verbs admitting such holistic constructions were certainly more numerous in Middle High German and later (examples from PAUL 1959:32 f.): *da 3 hūs sa 3 edeler vrouwen vol* (Craon) 'the house was brimming with (lit. sitting full of) noble women' (still accepted today if not unanimously); *ouch gienc der walt wildest vol* (Iwein) 'the forest was teeming (lit. walking) with game' (unacceptable today); *da 3 gevilde was volle 3 pavelüne geslagen* (Wigalois) 'the field was pitched with tents' (unacceptable today); *den wald sach er springen vol der wilden tiere, all specerey vol würme loffen* (H. Sachs) 'he saw the forest teem (lit. jump) with wild animals, all grocery crawl (lit. run) with vermin' (unacceptable today; *laufen* may take goal subjects, though: *Die Badewanne lief voll Wasser* 'the bath-tub was filling with water'); *Da loff die Thonaw oben vnd vnden Gar vol mit den payrischen hunden* (H. Sachs) 'the Danube was up and down flowing (lit. running) with the Bavarian curs' (unacceptable today); *Der prün vol rotter öpfel schwam* (H. Sachs) 'the basin was overflowing with red apples' (of doubtful acceptability today); *Das Gebürge saß und flog nicht allein voller Vögel ..., sondern es lag auch so voll Nester mit Eyern* (Simplicissimus) 'the mountains were not only abounding in (lit. sitting and flying full of) birds, they also abounded in (lit. lay full of) nests with eggs' (at least *fliegen* unacceptable today); *Dorfern, deren Wege alle mit frohlichen Kirchgängern zurückkamen* (J. Paul) 'villages whose streets were all (lit.) returning with happy church-goers' (totally unacceptable, probably a nonce formation). What this development in particular (and, incidentally, also the Icelandic one alluded to above) shows is that semantic transparency of GR's is a quantitative notion, inasmuch as we need to take into account the possibility that a certain semantic role may be construable in a certain GR in a larger or smaller percentage of all its occurrences (i.e. with a larger

or smaller number of predicates), rather than always or never. Thus, the subject relation in German has never been entirely transparent (there always were some predicates allowing local-setting nominative subjects alongside subjects mapping onto other semantic roles) nor entirely opaque (there always were predicates not allowing local-setting nominative subjects alternatively to, say, agent or patient subjects) with respect to the distinction between local setting and other semantic roles. What has changed merely was that the number of verbs admitting local-setting subjects decreased, and it is in this quantitative sense that the GR of subject can be said to be more transparent now than it used to be.

III

Apart from using the notions of transparency and functionality for purposes of language comparison, focusing on synchronic as well as diachronic contrasts, we ought to consider whether they also pertain to more genuinely typological questions. One might even attempt to explicate major distinctions in relational typology in terms of the interplay of the two principles.

Nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive patterns are often distinguished depending on whether intransitive actants/subjects, regardless of their semantic role, are identified with transitive agents/subjects (yielding an accusative pattern) or with transitive patients/objects (yielding an ergative pattern) for purposes of relational coding and, possibly, further grammatical and lexical regularities. As was noted in passing in section I, such variability of associations across different clause types (transitives and intransitives) is what one would expect to occur under the sway of the Functional Principle: co-present actants are distinguished quite economically in either pattern, without much concern for the transparent rendering of semantic roles not co-occurring with others (i.e. in intransitive clauses). Distinguishing all three core GR's for coding and other purposes, would be less economical; and identifying transitive subjects and transitive objects and distinguishing these two GR's from intransitive subjects of course would be against the very spirit of the Functional Principle, offending against the minimal distinctness requirement concerning co-present GR's. Holding the Functional Principle responsible for accusative and ergative coding (and behavioural) patterns as such, however, is not tantamount to claiming that core GR's in ergative as well as in accusative type languages (that is, in languages where the respective patternings prevail) cannot be semantically transparent at all. Recall that in section II, case studies were presented of increases and decreases in the semantic transparency of subjects in accusative-type languages (reserving judgment on the proper typological classification of Ozark English); and analogous developments certainly should not be ruled out a priori for ergative-type languages.

In another identificational pattern of typological repute, that of so-called active-type languages (as recognised by SAPIR 1917 and elaborated by KLIMOV 1977), the only actant of one-place predicates encodes, and sometimes behaves, either like the subject/agent or like the object/patient of two-place predicates, depending on

the dynamic or static character of the one-place predicate and/or the single actant's active or inactive semantic role. Comparing this to the accusative and ergative patterns, it would seem obvious that active-type cross-clausal identifications are primarily motivated by the Transparency Principle, this time referring to active vs. inactive participation, rather than by the Functional Principle. On the whole, the core-relational system of active-type languages indeed appears to operate in terms of semantically rather transparent relations, to an extent, in fact, that it could seem doubtful whether genuinely grammatical relations (such as subject and object, as distinct from active and inactive participant) are to be recognised there at all. In this respect, incidentally, the Old English situation with agent-experiencer transparency, the point of departure of the first case study in section II, bears a much closer resemblance to active than to ergative systems, in so far as the alignments of actants of one-place predicates (such as *hyngriþan*) with those of two-place predicates are not as arbitrary as the Functional Principle would have it, but definitely have a semantic rationale: experiencers of one-place predicates, as inactive participants, simply tend to pattern with inactive participants of two-place predicates, be they patients or themselves experiencers, for case-marking and agreement purposes, regardless of pragmatic divergencies, pragmatic distinctions being coded by independent devices (linear order) anyhow.

Active-type languages are not the only ones where it has occasionally been disputed that genuinely grammatical core relations such as subject and direct object can be defined to begin with. Philippine languages (including, most prominently, Tagalog) are often mentioned as exemplifying a further type whose crucial feature seems to be that no particular semantic role, neither, say, the agent nor the patient, is privileged to attain the pragmatic status of topic independently of the changeable requirements of actual discourse. (The defining property of the primary GR of subject would then be that one predicate-governed semantic role indeed outranks the others in topic-worthiness, no matter which role speakers topicalise in actual discourse.) Drawing again on our two basic concepts, it might be illuminating to characterise this alleged further type as manifesting a basic division of labour between functional/semantically totally opaque and transparent coding devices: the opaque marker, not distinguishing between semantic roles at all, would signal nothing but the actual discourse-pragmatic status of an actant, viz. that of (primary and perhaps also secondary) topic, with a subsidiary coding system perhaps keeping track of the topic's semantic identity; the transparent markers, on the other hand, would be distributed among the non-topical actants in accordance, more or less, with their semantic roles, and thus would be genuinely relational, semantic-relational rather than grammatic-relational, markers. Hedging with 'more or less', I meant to provide for the possibility that markers in the transparent coding subsystem may actually vary in the extent of their transparency (e.g. there might be completely transparent markers used exclusively for the recipient role, less transparent markers used with (non-topical) agents and patients indiscriminately, etc.).

In case the above speculation that there might be correlations between individual coding devices and degrees of transparency should turn out not to have been idle,

and if overall relational types are indeed explicable in terms of transparency-functionality antagonisms, we should also be able to advance generalisations about which coding devices are likely, or not so likely, to be preferred in languages of these various types. For instance, if adpositions, cases, and agreement/cross-reference would indeed tend to be semantically more transparent than linear order, it would not be surprising if active-type languages were found not to favour linear order to code their major relations. Relationally distinctive constituent order should have as its cross-linguistic domain rather ergative and accusative languages, or at least the core GR's in such languages. Ergative ordering patterns, however, appear to be rare; I am only aware of Tsimshian, which has S_{trans} VO and $VS_{intrans}$, but in addition employs ergative cross-referencing. But given that the distinctive power of linear ordering is vastly inferior in principle to that of segmental coding devices, the paucity of languages, of whatever type, using order as their only relational coding device presumably is not too worrying.

IV

Often, arbitrary grammatical features, or collections of features, have been used for purposes of typological classification. Ultimately, however, typological comparisons are of theoretical significance only if they involve non-arbitrary feature collections, the individual features in these collections necessarily, or at least statistically, correlating with one another, thus establishing holistic (or systemic) types. Some of the types mentioned in the preceding section – the ergative, active, and accusative ones – indeed have occasionally been conceived holistically, with their respective patterns of relational identification implying a host of further grammatical properties. But it would seem that our parameter itself – functional versus transparent relational coding –, far from referring to a peculiarity of grammatical organisation totally independent of the rest of the grammar, also points to a major holistic-typological distinction of languages. A closer comparison of Modern English and Modern German, two languages not differing in their accusative-type affiliation, could provide clues as to the nature of these alleged predominantly-transparent and predominantly-functional holistic types, once it is recognised that the core GR's subject and direct object in these two languages indeed differ considerably in semantic transparency.

The overall generalisation seems to be that the subject and direct-object relations are semantically much more specific in German than in English: a wider range of semantic roles is eligible for subjecthood and direct-objecthood in English than in German. And, since subject and direct-object selection is contingent upon individual (sets of) predicates rather than on semantic roles as such, there are more predicate-specific restrictions on subjectivisation and direct-objectivisation in German than in English, provided a particular semantic role is in principle subjectivisable or direct-objectivisable in both languages. Recall the last case-study from section II, where – in line with the present hypothesis – local-setting subjects were shown to be employed more liberally in English than in Modern German, as illustrated by

examples such as *This tent sleeps two persons*/**Dieses Zelt schläft zwei Leute* (instead: *In diesem Zelt können zwei Leute schlafen*) and *Lake Constance prohibits submarines*/**Der Bodensee verbietet U-Boote* (instead: *Auf dem Bodensee sind U-Boote verboten*). But this pattern is much more general: not only local-setting, but many further semantic roles are eligible for subjecthood and direct-objecthood with English verbs whose German translation-equivalents resist analogous transitive construals. Here are some further pertinent examples (for fuller empirical details, see again ROHDENBURG 1974): *The car burst a tyre*/**Der Wagen platzte einen Reifen* (instead: *Dem Wagen platzte ein Reifen*); *The roof was leaking water*/**Das Dach tropfte Wasser* (instead: *Vom Dach tropfte Wasser*); *The latest edition of the Bible has added a chapter*/**Die jüngste Ausgabe der Bibel hat ein Kapitel hinzugefügt* (instead: *Der jüngsten Ausgabe wurde ein Kapitel hinzugefügt*); *Keegan's second goal ended the match*/**Keegans zweites Tor beendete das Spiel* (unless the intended meaning is that his second goal was responsible for the end of the match, rather than merely coinciding with it; the appropriate rendering of the coincidence meaning would be *Mit Keegans zweitem Tor endete das Spiel*). Such comparisons, then, reveal a common semantic denominator of subjectivisation and direct-objectivisation regularities in German: generally, co-present participants must be in a relationship of what might be called polar opposedness in order to be eligible for the GR's of transitive subject and direct object. Participants are typically conceived of as polarly opposed when one is most actively involved, its opposite number least actively or merely re-actively; when the latter is most thoroughly affected or effected by what is happening, and thus completely under the control and influence of the former, responsible participant; when, in sum, two antagonists are represented as maximally unlike each other with regard to the kind of their involvement in the event. Because in English, semantic roles can be construed as transitive subjects and direct objects even when their degree of opposedness is quite low (or in fact nil), these two GR's are correspondingly much more opaque.

Now, what else in the grammars of English and German differs in accordance with the transparency (German) or opacity (English) of core GR's? Firstly, of course the coding devices used for these GR's: case and agreement in German, order and (less) agreement in English. Secondly, semantically rather specific selection restrictions between verbs and subjects or direct objects are quantitatively more characteristic of German than of English: two or more verbs in German may correspond to a single English verb lacking the selection restrictions found with its German counterparts (e.g. *put on* vs. *anziehen/aufsetzen/anlegen/umbinden/umlegen/anstecken*); or English may have verbs with selection restriction similar to those of their German counterparts, but may have additional, more common verbs without them (e.g. *stand/set/lay* – *stellen/setzen/legen*, but also *put*); or parameters of nominal classification may rank higher in the structure of lexical fields of verbs (such as the cooking verbs) in German than in the corresponding fields in English. Thirdly, there is the indirect passive (*He was sent many letters*), which is a construction rather untypical for languages with semantically specific object relations such as German (**Er wurde viele Briefe geschrieben*). In these latter languages, object

distinctions tend not to be neutralised in the passive, employing differential case-marking (*Ihm wurden viele Briefe geschrieben* lit. 'him were written many letters'), differential – direct vs. indirect – passive verb marking (*Er bekam viele Briefe geschrieben* 'he got written many letters'), or resumptive pronouns (approximately as in 'He had many letters sent to him'). Fourthly, Raising-to-Subject/Object is more common if the target GR's are semantically not very specific (e.g. *Bloggs is likely to come*/**Bloggs ist wahrscheinlich zu kommen*; *I expect him to come*/**Ich erwarte ihn (zu) kommen*). Fifthly, there appear to be stronger constraints on the movement of core actants out of and/or into finite clauses if the language has semantically relatively specific core GR's (cf. *The hat which I believe that he is always wearing is red*/**Der Hut, den ich glaube, daß er stets trägt, ist rot*, but: ... *von dem ich glaube, daß er ihn stets trägt* ... 'of which I believe that he is always wearing it'). Sixthly, pronominal objects appear to delete more easily, under pragmatic or syntactic control, if the language has opaque core GR's (cf. *He knows that the earth is flat but she doesn't know (it)*/**Er weiß, daß die Erde flach ist, aber sie weiß *(es) nicht*; *I bet he's forgotten*/**Ich wette, er hat ??(es/darauf) vergessen*). Seventhly, if two-place predicates are used with only one actant, transparent-GR languages tend to require pro-forms, which often resemble reflexives (cf. *The door opened*/**Die Tür öffnete *(sich)*; *He and she met*/**Er und sie trafen *(sich)*; *He shaved*/**Er rasierte *(sich)*). And lastly, instrumental objects tend to be less common in transparent-GR languages – but this may simply be another manifestation of the polar-opposedness constraint on transitive subject/direct-object configurations (cf. *to wag one's tail* vs. *mit dem Schwanz wedeln* 'wag with one's tail'; *She played the grand piano*/**Sie spielte (den) Flügel (... auf dem Flügel* 'on the grand piano'); *This was the first time she played on a piano/a piano/piano* vs. *Sie spielte zum erstenmal auf einem Klavier*/**ein Klavier/Klavier*).

I submit that all these are not minor and accidental differences between English and German, but correlate with one major, holistic-typologically significant difference, viz. the relative semantic transparency (German) and opacity (English) of subject and direct-object relations. Needless to say, more rigorous and extensive analyses, covering a wider range of languages than I have so far been able to look at, are required to help establish these correlations. These suggested correlations, at any rate, refer to gradual rather than categorical differences between languages. It is only natural, therefore, that the correlations which have so far survived my attempts to disconfirm them, result in tendencies of cross-linguistic, holistic-typological variation: they involve regularities or rules which ultimately are governed by individual predicates or classes of predicates. But then the typological parameter of transparency/opacity itself is of a gradual nature, both with respect to the number of semantic distinctions which may, or may not, be reflected in GR distinctions, and with respect to the proportion of predicates in a language which insist, or do not insist, on a given semantic distinction for particular GR's.*

* Sections I–III derive from PLANK 1977 (on which see ABRAHAM 1978a, b), slightly revised in the light of PLANK 1978a. Section IV consists of extracts from PLANK 1980a:

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* Fortsetzung von S. 11

70-2, 125, 133-41, in particular from the chapter 'Verbs and Objects in Semantic Agreement'. The views expressed in these sources, hence also in the present article, have been elaborated and partly modified in subsequent research; see in particular PLANK 1978b, 1979b, 1979c, 1979d, 1980b, 1982, 1983a (revising and expanding 1980a), 1983b. Prior to publication, these materials provided the basis of numerous conference presentations since 1977, and were distributed among several colleagues; some, I understand, were also used by others in their own teaching (the above-mentioned chapter 'Verbs and Objects ...', for instance, at the Stanford International Seminar for Contrastive Grammar, March 1980). I am glad to see - e.g. in *Linguistische Berichte* 75 (1981) 1-25 - that others are now occupying themselves with similar problems; and although more sophisticated, and more amply illustrated discussions of many points made in this article have been, or will be, available in other works of mine, I have decided to publish it in its present form, hoping that others continue to be encouraged, directly or indirectly, to start thinking, in their comparison of languages and in their general theorising, in the direction outlined here.

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