

SOME REMARKS ON CASE GRAMMARS AS BASES FOR CONTRASTIVE STUDIES

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In my dissertation I distinguished between two kinds of linguistic generalizations (cf. Boas 1975a:26 ff.). Primary linguistic elements that can be used to justify the basic assumptions of linguistic theories and grammatical models such as the postulating of components and levels of representation. Secondary generalizations concern the regularities observable within one component or on one level of representation and therefore presuppose a certain choice among the primary ones.

It was the setting up of generalizations of the first kind in Fillmore (1966a,b) and (1968a) that awarded case grammar the role of being, besides abstract syntax, the second crack in the transformational monolith of the late sixties.¹ Thus, Fillmore criticized the Chomskyan notion of deep structure as "an artificial intermediate level between the empirically discoverable 'semantic deep structure' and the observationally accessible surface structure, a level the properties of which have more to do with the methodological commitments of grammarians than with the nature of human languages" (1968a:88). He questioned in particular the necessity of expressing such grammatical relations as subject-of and object-of at the level of deep structure and postulated instead a division into a proposition consisting of a tenseless set of semantic relationships involving a verb and one or more nouns (and embedded sentences) and a 'modality' constituent. The latter includes such modalities on the sentence-as-a-whole as negation, tense, mood and aspect (cf. Fillmore 1968a:23). These deep case relationships comprise "a set of universal, presumably innate, concepts which identify certain types of judgments human beings are capable of making about the events that are going on around them, judgments about

¹ For this view see Starosta (1969).

such matters as who did it, who it happened to, and what got changed." (1968a:24). The preliminary list of semantic case relationships of the 'Standard Theory' of case grammar, i.e. Fillmore (1968a:24 - 25), includes the following:

Agentive (A), the case of the typically animate perceived instigator of the action identified by the verb.

Instrumental (I), the case of the inanimate force or object causally involved in the action or state identified by the verb.

Dative (D), the case of the animate being affected by the state or action identified by the verb.

Factive (F), the case of the object or being resulting from the action or state identified by the verb, or understood as a part of the meaning of the verb.

Locative (L), the case which identifies the location or spatial orientation of the state of action identified by the verb.

Objective (O), the semantically most neutral case, the case of anything representable by a noun whose role in the action or state identified by the verb is identified by the semantic interpretation of the verb itself.

Any verb can be classified according to the semantic case relationships it may have to its co-occurring nouns, or to put it in Fillmore's words, the case frame features "indicate the set of case frames into which given verbs may be inserted" (Fillmore 1968a:27). To represent the fact that certain verbs are capable of occurring in more than one case environment (cf. (1) - (4)) Fillmore used the notation under (5) which collapses the possibilities given in (1) - (4) (cf. *ibid.*)

(1) *The door opened.* [--- O]

(2) *John opened the door.* [--- O+A]

(3) *The wind opened the door.* [--- O+I]

(4) *John opened the door with a chisel.* [--- O+I+A]

(5) +[..... O(I) (A)]

Apart from the different array of cases verbs are distinguished from each other by the possibility that one of the cases may be an embedded sentence and by transformational properties such as exception features to the general subject and object selection rules, idiosyncratic choices of prepositions and specific complementizers (Fillmore 1968a:28 - 29).

Without going into further, especially technical, details of derivations in Fillmore's Standard Theory, let me only mention his contention that "the 'explanatory' use of this framework resides in the necessary claim that, although there can be compound instances of a single case (through noun phrase conjunction), each case relationship occurs only once in a simple sentence" (1968a:21). In addition, his rule for the normal or 'unmarked' subject choice is of interest for our purposes:

(6) If there is an A, it becomes the subject; otherwise, if there is an I, it becomes the subject; otherwise, the subject is the O (1968a:33).

Following this rule the NP in question undergoes subject-fronting and after several other transformational operations may end up as the surface subject. A "non-normal" subject-choice may associate the feature [+ passive] with the verb which then triggers the appropriate changes.

Summarizing our short sketch of the Standard Theory of Case Grammar it must be pointed out that the main explanatory value of assuming universal semantic deep structure cases resides in the fact that distinct arrays of such case relationships impose a semantic classification on the verbs (and adjectives) of individual languages and "express a notion of 'sentence type' that may be expected to have universal validity, independently of such superficial differences as subject selection" (1968a:21).

It was probably the attractiveness of being able to work with a small number of possibly universal descriptive semantic categories or labels that prompted the more or less thorough descriptions of a considerable number of languages in terms of the case grammar paradigm.² Criticisms of the Standard Theory of Case Grammar have mostly centered around problems that had already been alluded to in Fillmore (1968a) and that are certain to crop up once larger amounts of data than the anecdotal 'clear cases' are being investigated. Among these problems there are three which concern the substantive claims and empirical consequences of Fillmore's theory and not so much its formal representation and which are therefore particularly relevant to contrastive studies.

The first two closely interrelated problems have to do with the number and definitions of the supposedly universal case relationships between a verbal element and one or more nouns. The third relates to the difference in subject selection possibilities of equivalent lexical items in different languages permitting the same array of cases.

The problems connected with the number and the definition of case relationships can, for the purposes of our discussion, be illustrated best by comparing the list of six cases presented above with the one given in Fillmore (1971b:251; 259): Agent, Experiencer, Instrument, Object, Source, Goal, Location, Time and Path.³ The Experiencer which is partially identical to the old Dative occurs "where there is a genuine psychological event or mental state verb" (1971b:251). Depending on the class of the verb, as, for example, verbs of motion (*go ... from ... to*), verbs of change (*change ... from ... into*) and temporal lapse (*last ... from ... until*), Source and Goal

² Cf., for example, Donaldson (1973), Dugas (1969), Goldin (1968), Nilson (1973) and the references given there.

³ In Fillmore (1968b) the cases Counteragent and Result were postulated.

are interpreted as earlier and later locations, states or time points. (cf. 1971: 250). Because of this latter interpretation the Goal case can also include the former Factitive. Path is found in sentences like (7). Sentences containing this case as well as the cases of Location and Time (cf. (8)) violate

(7) *He walked down the hill across the bridge through the pasture to the chapel.*

(8) *He was sitting under the tree in the park on a bench Tuesday afternoon about three o'clock.* (1971b:259)

Fillmore's one-instance-per-clause principle only superficially. In (8) there is on a semantic level just one place and just one time specification. Fillmore also gives a reason why it is unnecessary to posit a new case like 'Force' as it had been suggested by Huddleston (1970). This putative case which would cover the accidental interpretation of (9) as well as the natural force phenomenon in (3) never occurs in contrast with either Agent or Instrument (cf. Fillmore 1971b:253) and may therefore be grouped with either of them. As to the treatment of *for you* in (10)

(9) *John broke the window.*

(10) *I do it for you.*

which could be analyzed as Benefactive Fillmore (1971b:261) proposes a higher sentence analysis in which "it is spelled out that somebody offers some deed to somebody else" and he postulates for this analysis an abstract verb of giving. A clause conflating principle then transforms the structure in (11) into

(11) *I give you (I do it)* (1971b:261)

(10). This assumption receives support from the fact that such a clause conflating principle might also be posited for the derivation of sentences like (12) and (13) on the grounds that there are languages in which such sentences can only be expressed as (14) and (15) respectively.

(12) *I hit the ball over the fence.*

(13) *I knocked the man down.*

(14) *I hit the ball; it went over the fence.*

(15) *I hit the man; he fell down* (Fillmore 1971b:256).

An examination of the above issues which, in fact, constitute only a small selection of those discussed in Fillmore (1971b) reveals that two seemingly contradictory lines of reasoning pervade his argumentation.⁴ In his attempt

⁴ This is also evidenced by Fillmore's (1971b:250) statement: "It is one thing to see if there is a stopping place in the attempt to list the semantic functions that go with any given predicator, another thing to see if the list of semantic functions found for different predicators have enough overlap to make it believable that there is a small list for grammatical theory in general".

to discover a repertory of universal case relationships "defined once and for all for human languages" (1971b:247) the criterion of descriptive adequacy in the sense of explicitness and the criterion of simplicity of the linguistic grammar collide. By the latter criterion the theory with the smaller number of case relationship, i.e. the one incorporating, for example, the clause conflating principle, would be favored, by the former criterion the theory which, in addition to Source and Goal, postulates cases like Distance or Duration⁵ would be more highly valued.

For contrastive lexical investigations it seems preferable to give priority to descriptive explicitness of the possibly different kinds and numbers of semantic deep cases exhibited by the lexical items of the languages being confronted. This is all the more advisable because overemphasizing the simplicity criterion amounts to accepting the Generative Semantics approach in which prelexical transformations are needed to make up for the decomposition of monomorphemic lexical items.⁶ This involves the setting up of a level of paraphrases the theoretical status and value of which is uncertain depriving thus contrastive analyses of the relatively sound basis of comparing possible semantic contexts of equivalent lexical items in the languages concerned.

To reconcile, however, Fillmore's claim as to the universality of case relationships with the fact that in certain languages case notions such as Source and Goal cannot be justified (cf. Frajzyngier (1975)) it might therefore be necessary to alter the status of the notion of case relationship. Semantic cases as unanalyzable units could be given up in favor of representing them as consisting of two or more components.⁷ This opens the possibility to show that certain semantic notions as for example directionality may be expressed by case relationships in one language or language group and by lexical means in another.

The problems that arise in determining the number and the kinds of cases can then be said to be empirical in nature, once the primary generalization basic to case grammar is sufficiently motivated, namely that predicators, such as verbs, adjectives and certain nouns⁸ can be intuitively seen as assigning different semantic functions to noun phrases that occur in specific syntactic positions with respect to them (cf. Fillmore 1971b:249). Where one should

⁵ Cf., for example, Zocopritz (1975) who argues for twenty deep case relationships in German, among them Distance and Duration.

⁶ For a discussion of the Generative Semantics approach see, for example, Boas (1975a).

⁷ In Fillmore (1970), however, deep cases are assumed to be unanalyzable. The problem of semantic features is also dealt with in Fillmore (1971a), in Starosta (1974) and in Nilson (1973) who sets up feature analyses for Agent, Experiencer, Instrument and Object.

⁸ In combining Chomsky's (1968) lexicalist hypothesis with case grammar Stockwell et alia (1973) provide case frames for certain nouns.

stop in the attempt to classify and to specify these semantic relationships may depend on the kind of language and on one's commitments to completeness and explicitness of description.⁹

The third problem mentioned above relates to the distinct subject selection possibilities of equivalent lexical items in different languages permitting the same array of case relationships. Consider the following examples taken from Zimmermann (1972). In (16) and (17) we have systematic correspondences between English and German which correlate with case structure.

(16)	___ O (A)	___ O	___ O, A
	heat	heiß werden	heiß machen
	grow	wachsen	anbauen
	move	sich drehen	drehen (Zimmermann 1972:173)
(17)	___ O (I) (A)	___ (I) O	___ O (I) A
	open	aufgehen, sich öffnen	aufmachen, öffnen (Zimmermann 1972:174)

(18) through (25) demonstrate that if it is impossible in German to subjectivize the same NP as in English this NP shows up as a preposition in German.¹⁰

- (18) Cancer kills many people.
An Krebs sterben viele Leute.
Krebs bringt viele Leute um. (Zimmermann 1972:175)
- (19) \$ 100 buys you a nice vacation.
Für 100 \$ können sie sich einen schönen Urlaub machen.
- (20) The German-Polish treaty begins a new era.
Mit dem deutsch-polnischen Vertrag beginnt eine neue Ära.
Der deutsch-polnische Vertrag leitet eine neue Ära ein.
(Zimmermann 1972:176)
- (21) This book sells fast.
Dieses Buch verkauft sich schnell.
- (22) This text reads well.
Dieser Text liest sich gut.
- (23) The novel sold 100 000 copies.
Von dem Roman wurden 100 000 Exemplare verkauft.
- (24) The car burst a tire.
An dem Wagen ist ein Reifen geplatzt.
- (25) The car lacks a tire.
(An) dem Wagen fehlt ein Reifen. (Zimmermann 1972:177)

⁹ Compare, for example, Brekle (1969) who works with about fifteen relational constants in his system of generative sentence semantics.

¹⁰ Cf. also König (1971).

For the latter kinds of phenomena Rohdenburg (1974) offers a wealth of material. He denies however that a case grammar framework can be used for his contrastive investigations (1974:105) into what he calls 'sekundäre Subjektivierungen'. Since his argumentation is based on a number of misconceptions and misinterpretations about the aims and methods of case grammar and on an incomplete evidence a discussion of some of his views may be in order in these remarks.

If one comes across statements like "So ist beispielsweise eine eindeutige Beantwortung der folgenden Fragen im Rahmen der Kasuslehre nicht möglich: a) Sind (102) b. und (102) c. gleichbedeutend?" (Rohdenburg 1974:101) it is necessary to point out that

- (102) b. *4 people were injured in that landslide.*
c. *4 people were injured by that landslide.*

neither Chomskyan grammars of the Aspects type nor Fillmorean case grammars were ever supposed to be evaluated on the basis of the discovery procedures that might erroneously be thought to be associated with them.¹¹ It cannot be the task of a linguistic theory and grammar to decide on questions of paraphrasability, ambiguity, etc. Case grammar like any other generative linguistic theory can only be expected to reflect and formalize the intuitions of native speakers which is in fact one of the criteria for the descriptive adequacy of such grammars.

As an example for the kind of evidence Rohdenburg (1974:79) uses consider (26) and (27) where the b-versions falsify, according to Rohdenburg, Fillmore's

- (26) a. *Pat's champion hunter jumped across the hedge.*
b. *Pat jumped her champion hunter across the hedge.*
(27) a. *Doug's sister slipped into the museum through the back door.*
b. *Doug slipped his sister into the museum through the back door.*

one-instance-per-clause principle by exhibiting two Agents. That this objection is untenable follows from Fillmore's (1971b:248) embedding analysis of such constructions based on the fact that there are paraphrases of the type (28) which contain an explicit causative.¹²

With respect to the data below (cf. (28)) Rohdenburg (1974:92-93) remarks that (28) b. makes one of the two interpretations of (28) a.

- (28) a. *That trick sold us the horse.*
b. *That trick sold us the horse to Peter.*
c. *That trick sold us the horse for Mary.*

¹¹ See, for example, Chomsky's (1965) statements on discovery procedures and their critique with respect to the competence-performance distinction in Boas (1975a).

¹² Similar analyses of causatives are proposed in Kastovsky (1973).

- d. *That trick sold us the horse to Peter for Mary.*
 e. *With that trick, we sold the horse to Peter for Mary.*

explicit and tries to identify the case role of *us* in (28) b. *To Peter* being a Goal case and (28) c. and d. excluding *us* from Benefactive status he first proposes to treat *us* as an Agent and then discards this possibility because it would violate the subject selection rule which requires an Agent to become subject in an active sentence.¹³ His question whether (28) d. and e. have the same meaning he decides in the negative on the basis of his impression that (28) d. unlike (28) b. and e. does not necessarily presuppose the active participation of the indirect object *us* in the 'commercial event'.¹⁴ He finishes the argument with another question, namely whether (28) d. and e. should, in spite of their difference in meaning, be derived from the same deep structure (Rohdenburg 1974: 93).¹⁵

Notice first that, as was pointed out above, the subject selection rule certainly admits exceptions — Hutchins (1975:113) therefore speaks of Fillmore's rule of preference — and that the supposed difference in meaning, if it exists at all, results from the indeterminateness of the abstract NP *that trick* which is only superficially resolved in (28) e. It is still present in (29) and (30) and can only be remedied by mentioning the

(29) *With* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{our} \\ \text{their} \end{array} \right\}$ *trick, we sold the horse ...*

(30) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Our} \\ \text{Their} \end{array} \right\}$ *trick sold us the horse ...*

performer of the trick as in (31) and (32).

(31) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Our performing that trick} \\ \text{Their performing that trick} \end{array} \right\}$ *sold us the horse ...*

(32) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{With our performance of that trick} \\ \text{With their performance of that trick} \end{array} \right\}$ *we sold the horse ...*

¹³ It is only a minor point that two out of the five claims of case grammar which Rohdenburg (1974:72) takes great pains to refute would have turned out to be no longer upheld in this form by Fillmore if he had taken Fillmore's views into consideration expressed in the same paper from which he quotes several times, namely his view that "certain predicators have their own lexically determined subject choices" (Fillmore 1971b: 247).

¹⁴ This term is used in Fillmore (1975) which will be discussed below.

¹⁵ It is beyond the scope of this paper to refute Rohdenburg's attacks on the paraphrasability principle of generative transformational grammar which is intimately related to the problem of deriving certain constructions from the same deep structure. It may suffice to point out that paraphrasability, ambiguity, etc. are the linguistic correlates to the native speaker's knowledge that something is the case in his language. For further discussion see Boas (1975a).

The following sentences further support our analysis of *that trick* as Instrument and of *us* as Agent or Goal although it

- (33) *That trick sold the horse for us.*
 (34) *That trick sold the horse to us.*
 (35) *That trick sold the horse to Peter for us.*
 (36) ?*That trick sold the horse for us to Peter for Mary.*
 (37) **That trick sold to us the horse to Peter.*

is difficult in (36) to separate in the *for* phrases the Goal or Benefactive reading from the *instead-of* reading.

In other places one might have also wished that Rohdenburg's urge to refute case grammar would not have stopped him from looking for generalizations. Thus it would have been interesting to find out in how far the sentence type represented by (38) - (41) owes its existence to the functioning of demonstratives

- (38) *So, that dissolves the metal with this funny-looking acid.*
 (39) *So, that crosses the Alps with the snowmobile.*
 (40) *That polishes the mirror in 30 seconds flat with brand x.*
 (41) *That discovers the first vein of uranium with this Geiger counter.* (cf. Rohdenburg 1974:75).

like *that* as the subject such that no other types of NPs occur in this position. It seems that the high degree of semantic indeterminateness of such demonstratives which is due to their pragmatic character enables them to become subject with almost any verb because they could be derived from any kind of underlying clausal structure which is appropriate in the pragmatic context of the sentence. The data presented above in connection with the interpretation of the abstract NP *that trick* are a first indication that such an analysis may be on the right track.

Along similar lines the derivation of the subjects in such sentences as (42) - (45) the verbs of which Rohdenburg (1974:94) terms

- (42) *This houseboat sleeps eight adults or sixteen children.*
 (43) *This recipe feeds eight adults or four children.*
 (44) *This restaurant feeds four hundred people a day.*
 (45) *These seeds will grow (you) one window box of herbs.*

'kapazitätsbezeichnende Prädikate' (1974:94) might proceed if one is dissatisfied with the assumption of two different lexical entries for such verbs,¹⁶ an assumption which according to Rohdenburg (1974:95) would amount to an abolition of case grammar.

¹⁶ Justifications for assuming different entries for semantically related items are given in Stockwell et al (1973:724 - 25).

As far as a contrastive explanation of the above differences in subjectivization possibilities between English and German is concerned I would like to suggest the following typological one: The low versus high degree of morphological markedness of noun phrases in English and German respectively results in a high versus low degree of 'mobility' of NPs with respect to the grammatical relations associated with verbs. In addition this lack of morphological markedness in English makes it difficult to distinguish between remnants of embedded clauses and basically simple NPs,¹⁷ a phenomenon which is in accordance with the observation that English as against German admits 'chopping transformations', i.e. transformations that move constituents across sentence boundaries without leaving a pronominal trace behind. In German the morphological integrity of clauses prohibits such reordering transformations across sentence boundaries.

In concluding these remarks I would like to mention some of Fillmore's (1975) most recent views on case grammar. Fillmore sees his deep case proposal as a contribution to the theory of grammatical levels and grammatical relations and "as offering at least part of the semantic valence descriptions of verbs and adjectives".¹⁸ Fillmore (1975:3). As a reaction to Anderson's (1971:23) arguments for the existence of deep structure subjects and objects Fillmore concedes that a level of representation for these nuclear grammatical relations must be recognized asserting at the same time that a level of representation of case functions is not spurious. He also recapitulates the problems of determining the number and identity of cases. The solution he offers derives from a position in semantic theory with which one could associate the slogan: "Meanings are Relativized to Scenes", (Fillmore 1975:2). He suggests that

any verb identifying any particular aspect of the commercial event will constrain us to bring one or more of entities in the event *into perspective*, the manifestation of this choice for English being the selection of grammatical functions corresponding to the notions of deep structure subject and direct object (Fillmore 1975:29).

¹⁷ Further arguments for the relevance of morphological marking in explaining syntactic differences between English and German are presented in Boas (1975a and b).

¹⁸ Emons (1974) tries to describe English verbs in terms of syntactic valences and criticizes Fillmore for obscuring "the various senses in which it is possible to speak of optional constituents in a sentence". (Fillmore 1975:11; cf. Emons 1974:47 - 51). Fillmore (1975:12) comments on this as follows: "my intention was that all of the various senses of optionality could be accounted for by the fact that the system I proposed had *case frames* indicating the case notions conceptually present in a sentence; *case frame features*, indicating case notions that could be combined in construction with a given lexical item; and *deletion transformations*, by which, under various conditions a given constituent could be, or maybe had to be, absent from the surface structure". It would be interesting to investigate whether the surface-oriented syntactic valence approach can be combined with Fillmore's semantic valence theory in an explanatorily adequate way.

This is evidenced by the verbs *sell*, *spend*, *pay* and *cost* which require different entities to be brought into perspective in different situations. Fillmore (1975:30) summarizes his modified approach in the following way:

"The new question for the theory of cases is this: What do we need to know about the various participant roles in a situation in order to know which of these roles or which combinations of them can be put into perspective, and, for those which have been put into perspective, which is to become the subject and which is to become the direct object?"

Although the reintroduction of the deep grammatical relationships of subject and object constitutes a revision of the Standard Theory, the Extended or Revised Standard Theory, as it were, still preserves its most important feature, namely its primary generalization that deep semantic case structure descriptions of words and sentences offer a level of linguistic organization at which universal properties of lexical and clause structure are to be found.

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