

## CONTENT, EXPRESSION AND STRUCTURE

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### Volume 29

Elisabeth Engberg-Pedersen et al. (eds)

*Content, Expression and Structure*  
*Studies in Danish functional grammar*

# CONTENT, EXPRESSION AND STRUCTURE

## STUDIES IN DANISH FUNCTIONAL GRAMMAR

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## Introduction

In Anglo-American linguistics a tradition has developed of viewing language in terms of levels inspired by philosophical logic. The definitions provided in the *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* are: “syntax deals with formal relations of signs to one another; semantics with the relation of signs to what they denote; and pragmatics with the relation of signs to their users and interpreters” (Horn 1992:260). It has been an issue of some debate to what extent each level is independent of the others. Functionalists claim that linguistic features are ultimately motivated by the use of language in communication. In accordance with the concept of language as consisting of levels, the functionalist approach is, therefore, sometimes described as explaining linguistic features by reference to external factors (see, for instance, Levinson 1983:40).

We find that the whole idea of levels and the extension of linguistic description to include the “levels” of semantics and pragmatics as well as socio- and psycholinguistic factors are mistaken. A functionalist approach implies a conception of language as a matching of content that can be communicated with the expressive means of the language. That is, instead of seeing language metaphorically as horizontal levels, one put on top of the other, we return to the basic Saussurean notion that languages have two planes: an expression plane and a content plane. Language is organized into units of increasing complexity, each having both a content and an expression, the smallest units being morphemes, the largest ones utterances, with lexical words and syntagms of various complexities in between. Thus we do not see semantic and pragmatic features as belonging to levels that are only taken into consideration once the morphological and syntactic units have been described. The link between content and expression is constituted by the sign, another Saussurean notion that should be reemphasised. This is a central aspect of what we mean by describing ourselves as functionalists: to convey content is the constitutive function of linguistic expression. Therefore any linguistic unit must be understood in its relationship with the content side of language; and something with no relationship to any conveyable content cannot be a linguistic unit.

In rejecting the levels model and analysing all units from the morpheme to the utterance as having both semantic-pragmatic content and expression, func-

tional grammar as practised in Denmark agrees with functionalist approaches elsewhere such as the ‘Columbia School’ and Cognitive Grammar. The view that languages fundamentally consist in the mapping of semantic-pragmatic content onto expression has, however, led us to emphasise the notion *content structure*. The term — borrowed from the Danish version of structuralism associated with the name of Louis Hjelmslev — can be roughly characterized as the way individual languages carve out and organize meaning, meaning being associated with every level of expression structure from the morpheme to the utterance.<sup>1</sup> Content structure is opposed to *content substance*, the non-linguistic (“notional”) world as given to us pre-linguistically and in which we act and try to realize our goals and purposes.

The attention paid to specific content structures of individual languages has important consequences for the psychological adequacy — or plausibility — of one’s linguistic theorizing and, indeed, for the neo-Whorfian endeavour to elucidate the cognitive significance of language-specific features of a given language for its speakers. The things one can express or comprehend through one’s language are indeed restricted — even determined — by the structure of the language itself, i.e. must conform to its content structure. This does not, however, lead to total linguistic relativism. The restrictions imposed by one’s language can be overcome both by expanding ‘readymade’ meanings through syntagmatic elaboration and by exploiting the content structure of other languages one learns to speak. Moreover, the view does not preclude perceptual and conceptual categorizations that are not determined by one’s language, e.g. for typical colour discrimination.

Taking the content structure of the linguistic sign system seriously is, moreover, a way of avoiding the pitfalls that attend the stipulation of ‘underlying’ linguistic abstractions whose reality can only be shown theory-internally. The only elements that require elucidation are those that are reflected directly in “surface” expression. For unlike generative and (neo-generative) modular approaches to grammar, the approach that has developed amongst functionalists in Denmark regards the semantic-pragmatic content of language as in a sense no deeper than the “surface” structure. The notion of content structure is true to the cardinal Saussurean insight whereby the linguistic sign is seen as bearer of its own meaning, whether this be the sign as morpheme, lexical word, syntagm or utterance. Psychological adequacy is ensured by faithfulness to an adequate structural description, meaning being simply the obverse of expression (allowing of course for the possibility of non-isomorphic expression-to-content mappings).



As regards the relationship between the language-specific and language universals (whether synchronic or diachronic) the studies in this volume endeavour first and foremost to clarify structural categories coded in the languages concerned on their own terms. Any attempt to explain them by or relate them to either general discourse factors or general cognitive abilities is a subsequent step. In other words, 'functions' on this view are understood primarily as inherent to language and only in the second place as reflecting general pragmatic and cognitive factors that impinge upon grammars. Moreover, in any linguistic work there is a constant movement back and forth between language-specific and universal linguistic categories relevant to the analysis at hand. What is being advocated here is a preferred orientation towards the language-specific, not a dogmatic standpoint. In particular, the notion of 'emic' categories should be taken to include textual structures — in fact any domain displaying expression-meaning pairings, stopping short only where inferencing or non-linguistic world knowledge leads outside the realm of content structure altogether.

With respect to what is conventionally coded, from the morpheme to the text, the focus lies especially, but not exclusively, on what is grammaticalized. By 'grammaticalized' we do not mean only what is expressed by means of bound morphemes, but also what is expressed by markers, word order, prosody and constraints between different constructions within the sentence or between different constituents of a construction. Grammaticalization is a question of degree of obligatoriness.

The commitment to taking both language-specific content and expression structures seriously entails a certain scepticism towards postulates of universal semantic-pragmatic content and universal grammatical categories. We see it as a major task for linguists to describe with all possible precision the individual content and expression structures of as many genetically unrelated and typologically divergent languages as possible, and only then, based on such analyses, to engage in the setting up and testing of universal categories. The general procedure is thus to start with categories relevant to one language (or group of related languages) and then compare their categories — as regards both content and expression — with similar, but overlapping categories in other languages. One will find that such a category, e.g. tense, may differ from language to language as regards both content (e.g. deictic or relative time reference) and expression (e.g. obligatory affixal marking of every finite verb as opposed to optional adverbials), but that these differences are precisely specifiable. One can then set up universal categories **either** as relatively abstract types indicating the parameters of variation found in individual languages/language groups, **or** as prototypes which are instantiated in some languages/language groups (the

ones for which the categories were originally suggested), and from which other languages can be seen to diverge in fairly open-ended, but specifiable ways.

We do not, however, exclude the possibility of taking content substance as the point of departure for language comparison. Such an approach consists of the delimitation of a linguistically relevant cognitive or communicative content and the subsequent analysis of how this content is structured and expressed in different languages.

The articles in this volume can be seen as a demonstration of how serious attention to the linkage of semantic-pragmatic content and expression categories of individual languages can contribute to a deeper understanding of linguistic categories and their functions.

The first three articles take their point of departure in familiar cross-linguistic notions. They show how the structures of individual languages define their own categories, but also contribute to the delimitation of the cross-linguistic prototypes. These are useful for language comparison, but the point shared by the three articles is that you cannot go directly from cross-linguistic prototypes to the description of individual languages.

‘Is there a passive in Nahuatl?’ questions the usefulness of lumping together quite diverse constructions from different languages under the term passive. It is pointed out that by calling certain constructions of 16th century Nahuatl passive, we suppress the fact that, by contrast to prototypical passives, so-called passive verbs in Nahuatl cannot occur with an explicit agent. The analysis of such verbs as passives, moreover, neglects the importance of the concept of unspecifiability in the grammar of Nahuatl: certain morphological facts about Nahuatl verbs indicate that the so-called passives should be described as verbs having two subjects, an unspecifiable agent and a “promoted” object, and unspecifiability also plays a role in other parts of Nahuatl grammar. The paper thus stresses the importance — both for the description of the individual language and for typological purposes — of taking the structure of any individual language seriously.

In ‘Grammaticalized focus in Yukagir: Is it really grammaticalized and is it really focus?’ the so-called grammatical focus system of Yukagir is analysed in terms of the standard pragmatic functions of Dik’s Functional Grammar. It is demonstrated that the phenomenon actually covers the functional territory of both Focus and New Topic and interacts moreover with less grammaticalized aspects of the pragmatic articulation of utterance in Yukagir texts, principally word order variation. This raises the question as to where the border can or should be drawn between those aspects of focus which are fully grammaticalized in terms of ‘emic’ categories of expression in the language and those that

merely reflects the distinctions of usage in the wider, less systematized realm of discourse 'etics'. Because of the unusually explicit nature of the category of focus within its verbal morphology, Yukagir is a particularly useful language on which to test the universality of application of these notions.

In 'Iconic motivations in conflict: Language-specific structure and influence from the medium' it is demonstrated that linguistic expression can enforce a certain structure upon content because of its physical character, but also that claims of iconicity are no short-cut to an analysis of language-specific structure, as iconic factors can compete such that different languages — or different stages of one language — can have different iconically motivated structures. The data come from Danish Sign Language and relate to verb agreement expressed spatially and the expression of a specific point of view in verbs. Parallels attributable to common communicative and cognitive factors between signed and spoken languages are pointed out, as well as differences due to the difference in medium.

The theme of the next three articles is content structure in Danish focusing on verb-related meanings.

'The syntax of Danish verbs: Lexical and syntactic transitivity' shows how the semantics of Danish verbs can only be understood in relation to structural patterns which massively reorganize the basic meanings of verb stems as they become integrated in fully specified syntactic contexts. Taking their point of departure in the failure of the traditional transitive-intransitive distinction to serve as a useful way to set up classes of verb stems, the authors argue that the essential semantic correlate of the transitivity distinction can be captured in terms of a distinction between "actions" and "activities", in terms of which all "action" readings are coded by transitive constructions and all "activity" readings are coded by intransitive constructions. Comparing extensively with other languages, they then proceed to demonstrate how, among the mechanisms that affect the relatively unspecified meaning of Danish verb stems, detransitivization devices seem to constitute a preferred strategy.

'From lexical potential to syntactic realization: a Danish verb valency model' applies the basic structural distinctions that recur throughout the volume to the linguistic area of valency relations. One reason why it has proved so difficult to achieve satisfactory results beyond the core cases that occupy the central area in all valency models is that several sets of semantic properties interact in this area; a major point of the article therefore consists in identifying the whole range of paradigmatic oppositions and syntagmatic combination possibilities that languages tend to code together.

The article on ‘Danish directional adverbs: Content syntax and complex predicates — a case for host and co-predicates’ discusses the role of direction-marking adverbs in the content structure of Danish, with special reference to the pervasive differentiation of the role of the central predicate into a “host predicate” and a “co-predicate”. The semantics of these adverbs is argued to involve a verb-like property, that of taking an obligatory locative argument. Another aspect discussed is their role as indicators of “subjective direction”: as opposed to cases where the directionality is inherent in the situation **type**, the Danish adverbs typically place the location as it appears from the subjective perspective of the speaker.

The article on ‘Danish passives and subject positions as a mood system’ presents a semantic distinction that is made in a number of different places in the Danish content system. The core feature is a distinction between presenting a SoA as rendering “actual facts as seen by the speaker” and as “things seen through other eyes”. The latter half of the distinction has several sub-variants, including generic, normative, quotational or fictional readings. The article demonstrates how this distinction is coded by the choice between the two Danish passives, and by the choice between two ways of coding indefinite subjects; the distinction also surfaces in other places. In order to give an account that does justice to the role of this distinction in Danish, we need to go beyond the standard inventory of structural notions.

The next three articles are also about Danish, but focus on the coding of discourse-oriented “pragmatic” types of meaning. In this they illustrate that the habitual contrast between grammatical structure and “pragmatics” is inadequate from a functional point of view.

‘Information structure and the anatomy of the noun phrase: The expression of subject and object in Danish noun phrases’ demonstrates that information structure plays a crucial role at a level not usually considered in relation to information structure, i.e. within the complex noun phrase in Danish. Danish has the possibility of expressing the relations of a deverbal head noun to its modifying “complements” either as a preposed genitive or a postposed prepositional phrase. It is shown that when the language user has a choice between a genitive and a prepositional phrase, the decisive factor is pragmatic. In the limited number of cases where the language user has no choice, the distribution of the modifiers on genitives and prepositional phrases is determined by a small set of lexico-syntactic constraints.

‘Topic continuity and prosody: An experimental study in Danish’ describes a study into the relationship between pronominal stress and reference. The experiment presented subjects with a range of sentence pairs in which there

was more than one candidate for antecedent function, varying the parameter of pronominal stress. The problem belongs in the field of topic continuity and reference tracking, and the results are interesting in showing the way in which a minimal coding parameter such as presence or absence of stress interacts with the referential context; the importance of coding vis-a-vis purely “situational” plausibility is clearly demonstrated.

‘Discourse particles in Danish’ is about a group of interactively used monosyllabic particles, which constitute a characteristic feature of Danish: they are a familiar stumbling-block for foreign learners — and for those who try to translate them, particularly into English. The slot which they occupy in the content structure of Danish is analysed as belonging in the category of proposition operators. Their meaning is understood as involving in most cases an element of polyphony, signalling the status of the proposition in relation to speaker, hearer, and possibly other discourse sources.

‘*Eh bien*: Marker of comparison and contrast’ relates to the preceding article in dealing with discourse markers, but differs from the main body of articles in this volume in focusing on an element outside the core area of grammar, the French discourse marker *eh bien*. Although it is often claimed that such markers are “without semantic content”, the author shows that like other linguistic expressions this type can be understood as having a function that constitutes its coded meaning — in the nature of an instruction from the speaker to the hearer about how to understand the utterances before and after the particle. Her account demonstrates how the marginal place accorded to such elements represents a radical underestimation of their importance — which can only be understood if coded meanings are understood in relation to the communicative process.

‘The degrammaticalization of agentivity in Tlapanec’ illustrates another consequence of a content-oriented approach to language description. Behind a fully productive verbal inflectional system in the Mexican language Tlapanec can be found a peculiar lexicalized contrast with semantic parallels to active case marking. The category exhibits very little interaction with other categories of the language, and language users do not systematically associate a particular meaning with the contrast. The article points up the importance of distinguishing fully productive categories from relics of the type described.

Prepositions have had a central position in the renewed interest in semantics created by cognitive linguistics. Functional and cognitive approaches to the description of locative prepositions explain these in terms of either communicative needs (i.e. the landmark theory) or in terms of how humans perceive space and act in space. Geometry is said to have little to do with either of

these functions. In 'The functions of locative prepositions' it is pointed out that geometry plays a role with respect to both kinds of functions, however. It is demonstrated that the most simple general interpretation rule for locative prepositions is that they express a difference between two positions in the dimension explicitly mentioned while there is no, or only little, difference in the other dimensions. This interpretation rule can be seen as a result of communicative needs.

In theories on second language acquisition it has been postulated that all learners pass through the same developmental sequence irrespective of linguistic background. The article 'Communicative function and language-specific structure in second language acquisition: A discussion of natural sequences of acquisition' presents data on the acquisition of inversion and negation from Danish as well as other languages and discusses the so-called theory of natural sequences in a functional perspective. The main point is that without an approach based on functional semantic and pragmatic categories and with due consideration of the peculiarities of each language, the data cannot be described adequately; important systematic patterns in the acquisitional process are ignored. The hypothesis put forward is that learners search for communicatively loaded parts of the second language. The interlanguage will be characterized by reductions and simplifications of the less communicatively important parts of the new language.

The last three articles of the volume constitute a theoretical meta-section. They are the results of discussions in a group consisting of the authors and Lisbeth Falster Jakobsen. The point of the article 'Linguistic structure in a functional grammar' is to present a concept of structure that avoids the fallacies of the structural tradition without throwing out the baby with the bath water: in order to be precise about the way an individual language is organized, we cannot rely solely on non-structural accounts of language functions. The interest is mainly oriented towards semantic substance; and a major point is that the concept of "syntax" that the generative hegemony has imposed on the linguistic community is untenable, and with it the tripartition into syntax, semantics and pragmatics that is widely assumed also by functionalists. A major point in suggesting a revised architecture is to point out the existence of a content side of syntax, thus putting the role of syntax in organizing meaning on the agenda. It is argued that linguistic structure is neither totally autonomous nor totally motivated. Whenever there is a function involved, there are always some options that are equally good (to which extent the choice is arbitrary) and some options that are better than others (to which extent the choice is motivated).

The main point of 'Iconicity and arbitrariness' is that claims of iconicity cannot ignore structure in a direct linking of content and expression in language. The paper discusses and exemplifies different concepts of iconicity deriving from Saussure and Peirce. An important distinction is the one between imaginal diagrams and diagrams based on analogy. In an imaginal diagram a feature of the expression as substance (e.g. linearity) is reflected in the expression structure which in turn reflects a similar feature of the content plane (e.g. semantic "firstness" reflected in temporal priority of a structural unit within a larger structural unit on the expression plane). In a diagram based on analogy the diagrammatic relation between content and expression is only realized when a relation of analogy is first established between content elements (e.g. importance interpreted as "firstness" and expressed temporally first).

The article on 'Paradigmatic structure, word order and grammaticalization' shows how existing standard views on structure need to be revised in order to get a clear and whole view of structural change. The main theoretical concept is the notion of a paradigm, which is in need of clarification because it is ambiguous between several different senses with different implications for what constitutes grammaticalization. The article argues that standard conceptions are too narrow and shows how a revised understanding can give word order changes a natural place within a theory of grammaticalization, and also accommodate additional related phenomena that otherwise tend to get overlooked.

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*Copenhagen, November 1995*

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## Notes

1. Hjelmslev (1943) used the terms *content form* and *expression form*. We do, however, find that the term *form* is likely to mislead as *form* is generally used in the meaning 'expression' in American linguistics.

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# Is there a passive in Nahuatl?

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## 1. Introduction

The title of this paper is polemically naive. But a more appropriate one: “Do we gain or lose by calling a certain construction in Nahuatl a passive? And what is it that we gain or lose?” is much too long for a title of any short paper.

The passive is a construction that has received no little attention in the last forty years since Noam Chomsky attempted to teach us that a passive sentence is a transform from an active sentence. And a number of scholars have since then dealt cross-linguistically with the passive and related constructions and have tried — with meagre success — to arrive at a definition of the passive. Let me quote a few. In the final summary of her book from 1984 Siewierska finds that:

The passive may therefore be characterized as a construction:

- a) which has a corresponding active the subject of which does not function as the passive subject
- b) the event or action expressed in the passive is brought about by some person or thing which is not the passive subject, but the subject of the corresponding active
- c) the person or thing if not overt is at least strongly implied.

(Siewierska 1984:256)

and she concludes that:

The term *passive* can only be valid and useful for purposes of language description if it refers to the same type of structure in all languages in which this construction is said to be displayed. The discussion here has shown that the constructions called passive have very little in common. [...] Whether the three properties that they share warrant a common passive label is debatable.

(Siewierska 1984:259)

Shibatani comments that:

the familiar controversy over whether a given construction should be considered passive is pointless; rather, a description must be offered in terms of how such a construction is similar to or different from the prototypical passive.

(Shibatani 1985:822)

and in the article he constantly returns to “defocusing of an agent” as “the primary pragmatic function of the passive prototype”.

The aims of the present paper are twofold: first I wish to demonstrate that Nahuatl spoken in the 16th century did not have a passive. The Nahuatl constructions which are traditionally called passive and impersonal are more appropriately described — not as impersonals — but as having an unspecifiable subject; and in fact, the traditional distinction between passives and impersonals is mainly confusing.

To my knowledge, no one — neither typologists (Siewierska 1984) nor specialists of Nahuatl (Olmos 1547; Carochi 1645; Andrews 1975; Launey 1976, 1979, 1986; Langacker 1976, 1977; Langacker & Munro 1975) — has seriously questioned the existence of passive in Nahuatl. However, formulations such as “no specifiable referent in the nonlinguistic world” (Andrews 1975:79), “effacement du sujet” (Launey, e.g. 1981:21), etc. are commonly found; it is therefore surprising that this insight has led no one to take the final step.

Secondly, as a corollary to the first aim, I wish to suggest that we reserve the term passive for the best known, but apparently exceptional constructions, namely those that include an optional agent.

## 2. The situation in Nahuatl from the 16th century

In Nahuatl, nouns are not marked for case. Verbs are with prefixes marked for person and number of subject and object (see Table 1). The marking is obligatory and thus occurs also when a nominal subject and object are present in the clause.<sup>1</sup>

- (1)        *ni-yo:li*  
              1SG:SUBJ-live  
              ‘I live’

Table 1: *Subject and object prefixes in 16th century Nahuatl*

	SUBJECT	OBJECT
SG		
1.	ni-	ne:č-
2.	ti-	mič-
3.	Ø	ki-, te:-, λa-
PL		
1.	ti- .. ’	te:č-
2.	am- .. ’	ame:č-
3.	Ø .. ’	kim-

(2) *Ø-yo:li-’*                      *in*   *či:či:me:ka-’*  
 3:SUBJ-live-PL:SUBJ the Chichimec-PL  
 ‘the Chichimecs (they) live’

(3) *ti-yo:li-’*  
 1PL:SUBJ-live-PL:SUBJ  
 ‘we live’

(4) *ni-k-itta*                      *in*   *koyo:λ*  
 1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-see the coyote  
 ‘I see (it) the coyote’

(5) *Ø-ne:č-itta-’*                      *in*   *či:či:me:ka-’*  
 3:SUBJ-1SG:OBJ-see-PL:SUBJ the Chichimec-PL  
 ‘the Chichimecs see me’

The distinction between intransitive and transitive is an important feature in the language; a transitive verb **must** have an object prefix. If there is no specifiable object one of two prefixes occurs, *te:-* ‘human’, *λa-* ‘nonhuman’:

(6) *ni-te:-itta*  
 1SG:SUBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:HUM-see  
 ‘I see (humans)’

(7) *ni-λa-k<sup>w</sup>a*  
 1SG:SUBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-eat  
 ‘I eat’

The independent words meaning ‘something’, *i* $\lambda$ *a*, and ‘someone’, *aka*, are — as opposed to *te*:- and  $\lambda$ *a* — syntactically specifiable and demand the regular 3. person singular specifying object prefix:

- (8) *kʷiʃ*            *iλaʹ*            *ti-k-kʷa*  
 QUESTION    something    2SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-eat  
 'do you eat something?'

There is only one set of specifying object prefixes; the object marking thus gives no evidence for distinguishing between indirect and direct object:

- |      |   |                                     |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|
| (9)  | <i>ni-k-λa-maka</i><br>1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-give<br>'I give (him/her) my father "things"' | <i>no-ta'ēin</i><br>1SG:POSS-father |
| (10) | <i>ni-k-te:-maka</i><br>1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:HUM-give<br>'I give (it) the flower away'           | <i>in šo:čil</i><br>the flower      |

According to an exceptionless rule only one specifying object marker is permitted per verb. If there are two specifiable objects, only one of them is marked on the verb:

- (11) *Ø-ne:č-Ø-maka* *no-ta'əin* *in šo:čil*  
 3:SUBJ-1SG:OBJ-3SG:OBJ-give 1SG:POSS-father the flower  
 '(he/she) my father gives me the flower'
- (12) *ni-k-Ø-maka* *in šo:čil* *no-ta'əin*  
 1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-3SG:OBJ-give the flower 1SG:POSS-father  
 'I give (it) the flower to my father'

*Maka* 'give' is a ditransitive verb, and the **absence** of an unspecifying object prefix (*te:-* or *λa-*) in examples (11) and (12) indicates that both objects are specifiable; nothing in the language indicates a distinction between our concepts of direct and indirect object, but if a first or second person object co-occurs with a third person object, then third person yields to first or second person. Since two specifying object prefixes never co-occur in one verb form, the place of the *Ø* is arbitrary, and example (11) may just as well be written this way: *Ø-Ø-ne:č-maka*. Table 1, which shows positions of the prefixes, should probably have one more position for the other object that just never appears.

A nominal object may be incorporated, appearing in the position immediately preceding the verb; the restrictions on object prefixes do not apply to an

incorporated object, so in ditransitive verbs it may co-occur with a specifying object prefix:

- (13)      *ni-k-šo:či-maka*                      *no-ta'ēin*  
             1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-flower-give    1SG:POSS-father  
             'I give (him/her) flowers to my father'

There is also a set of reflexive prefixes which have their position after the specifying object prefixes and before *te:-* and *la:-*:

- (14)      *ni-no-mik-tia*  
             1SG:SUBJ-1SG:REFL-die-CAUS  
             'I kill myself'
- (15)      *Ø-mo-mik-tia*  
             3:SUBJ-3SG:REFL-die-CAUS  
             'he kills himself'
- (16)      *ti-to-mik-tia-'*  
             1PL:SUBJ-1PL:REFL-die-CAUS-PL:SUBJ  
             'we kill ourselves'

The order of prefixes is: subject prefix, specifying object prefix, reflexive prefix, unspecifying human object prefix, and unspecifying nonhuman object prefix (see Table 2).

Table 2: *Verbal prefixes and their positions*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	SUBJ	SPEC.OBJ	REFL.PREF	UNSP.OBJ		
1	ni-	ne:č-	-no-			
2	ti-	mič-	-mo-			
3	Ø	k(i)-	mo-	te:-, la-	incorp. N	stem
1	ti- ..'	te:č-	-to-			
2	am- ..'	ame:č-	-mo-			
3	Ø ..'	ki-im-	mo-			

A whole array of derivational suffixes derive transitives from intransitives and ditransitives from transitives, with varying content and functions of the new arguments according to choice of derivational suffix:

- (17) *ni-k-yo:li-tia* (from *yo:li* 'live')  
1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-live-CAUS  
'I revive him'
- (18) *ni-k-λa-k<sup>w</sup>a-ltia* (from *k<sup>w</sup>a* 'eat')  
1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-eat-CAUS  
'I feed him'
- (19) *ni-k-λa-k<sup>w</sup>a:-lia* (from *k<sup>w</sup>a* 'eat')  
1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-eat-"APPLICATIVE"  
'I eat from/for him'

The markings of subject and object on the verbs do not express semantic roles. The following examples show how the syntactic subject disregards the semantic role of its referent:

- (20) *Ø-miki* 'he dies'
- (21) *Ø-we:iya* 'he becomes big'
- (22) *Ø-weči* 'he falls'
- (23) *Ø-k<sup>w</sup>i:ka* 'he sings'
- (24) *Ø-ičteki* 'he robs'
- (25) *Ø-k-a:na* 'he takes it'
- (26) *Ø-k-mik-tia* 'he kills him'

### 3. Constructions traditionally called impersonals and passives

The constructions that are traditionally called impersonals and passives are centered around verbs derived with two derivational suffixes, *-wa* and *-(l)o*, from intransitive and transitive verbs, respectively; historically the two suffixes can be shown to have the same origin (cf. Launey 1981). Basically, intransitive verbs take the suffix *-wa*, and transitives take the suffix *-(l)o*. However, this distribution is not absolute; the suffix *-wa* also occurs with a few transitive verbs; and the suffix *-(l)o* is found with some intransitive verbs. For the present discussion the distribution of the two suffixes is of no consequence.

The translation of the following examples is in agreement with the traditional interpretation of the constructions:

- (27) *ni-koči*  
1SG:SUBJ-sleep  
'I sleep'
- (28) *koči:-wa*  
sleep-"IMPERSONAL"  
'"people" sleep'
- (29) *ni-k-k<sup>w</sup>a*  
1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-eat  
'I eat it'
- (30) *ni-k<sup>w</sup>a:-lo*  
1SG:SUBJ-eat-"PASS"  
'I am eaten'
- (31) *λa-k<sup>w</sup>a:-lo*  
UNSPEC:NONHUM-eat-"IMPERSONAL"  
'something is eaten'
- (32) *ni-k-λa-maka* *no-ta'ēin*  
1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-give 1SG:POSS-father  
'I give (him/her) my father "things"'
- (33) *Ø-λa-mak-o* *no-ta'ēin*  
3SG:SUBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-give-"PASS" 1SG:POSS-father  
'my father is given something'
- (34) *te:-λa-mak-o*  
UNSPEC:HUM-UNSPEC:NONHUM-give-"IMPERSONAL"  
'someone is given something'

The Jesuit Horacio Carochi, who in 1645 wrote an impressively insightful grammar of Nahuatl, makes an interesting distinction between passive and impersonal based on the specifiability of arguments. Forms within the sphere of impersonals and passives that have no specifiable argument he calls impersonals, whereas those that have at least one specifiable argument are named passives. He would thus call (28), (31), and (34) impersonals and (30) and (33) passives.

The derivation of verbs with the suffixes *-wa* and *-(l)o* was productive in the 16th century; however, it was subject to some general constraints con-

(35) Ø-wa:ki in šo:čiλ  
3:SUBJ-dry the flower  
'the flower dries'

(37) Ø-mo-k<sup>w</sup>a  
3:SUBJ-3SG:REFL-eat  
'it is eaten'

Los verbos passiuos no tienen persona, que haze, que en latin se pone en ablativo con *a.* vel *ab.* por que no se dize en esta lengua yo soy amado de Pedro, lo qual es menester dezir por actiuo, *nēchtlaçōtla in Pedro.* (The passive verbs do not



have a person that acts, the one which in Latin is given in the ablative with *a* or *ab*, because in this language one does not say I am loved by Pedro, this it is necessary to express with the active, *nēchtlaçõtla in Pedro* [Pedro loves me].)  
(Carochi 1645:433)

This observation has been repeated in all later descriptions of the language.

Now, the lack of agent in the constructions called passives is cross-linguistically not such a rare feature. However, Nahuatl *lo*-verbs deviate markedly in another respect: they can be derived from reflexive verbs. The verb meaning ‘run’ is inherently reflexive in Nahuatl:

- (39)     *ni-no-λaloo*  
          1SG:SUBJ-1SG:REFL-run  
          ‘I run’

When *lo*-verbs are derived from reflexive verbs, an unspecifying reflexive prefix, *ne-*, occurs: *ne-λalo:-lo* ‘everyone runs’. In Nahuatl — just like in other languages — the characteristic feature of a reflexive form is that the referents of subject and object are identical. Reflexive constructions thus presuppose a subject. To explain the reflexive form of *lo*-verbs with the unspecifying reflexive prefix I therefore propose that these verbs have an unspecifiable subject:

- (40)     *ne-λalo:-lo*  
          UNSPEC:REFL-run-UNSPEC:SUBJ  
          “‘people” run’

This leads me to suggest a different analysis of *lo*-verbs in general, namely that they all have an agent, but an unspecifiable one. Example (30) will thus receive the following analysis and a different translation:

- (30')    *ni-k"a:-lo*  
          UNSPEC:SUBJ-1SG:OBJ-eat-UNSPEC:SUBJ  
          ‘someone unspecifiable eats me’

This also clarifies the apparent lack of agent: the agent cannot be expressed because it is already there, although unspecifiable and expressed by zero.

According to this analysis the sentence has two subjects, an unspecifiable agentive subject and a specifiable human subject, expressed by the regular subject marker, promoted from object status. None of the two can be explained away and analyzed as something else; the one has the regular shape of a subject prefix, and the other, the unspecifiable one, is presupposed as subject by the unspecifying reflexive prefix.

In discussions about causatives — and passives — and the hierarchy of grammatical relations Comrie has touched in general terms upon the possibility of “two subjects in a single clause”. He says:

Since the English passive involves two processes — OBJECT PROMOTION and SUBJECT DEMOTION or SUBJECT DELETION — a reasonable question to ask is whether, in other languages, these two exist independently, i.e. whether there are languages with passives involving only Subject Demotion, or involving only Object Promotion. The latter possibility would give rise to a derived structure with two subjects, and while I am not convinced that such a structure must be excluded from linguistic theory, I know of no languages where the passive illustrates this possibility.

(Comrie 1977:47-48)

This description applies quite accurately to Nahuatl constructions with *lo*-verbs: the object is promoted, and the subject is not deleted, but unspecifiable.

The analysis that posits an unspecifiable subject in constructions with *lo*-verbs receives support from other cases of unspecifiability in Nahuatl: I have already shown that ‘unspecifiable object’ is expressed by the prefixes, *te*:- and *λa*- (see examples (6) and (7)). Unspecifiability is found also in connection with nouns: an ‘unspecifiable possessor’ is expressed by the prefix *te*:-. In Nahuatl, nouns are explicitly marked as unpossessed or possessed, whereas the noun referring to the possessor has no marking:

- (41) *siwa*:-*λ*  
woman-UNPOSSESSED  
‘woman’
- (42) *no-siwa*:-*w*  
1:SG:POSS-woman-POSSESSED  
‘my woman’
- (43) *i*:-*siwa*:-*w* *iécoaλ*  
3:SG:POSS-woman-POSSESSED Itzcoatl  
‘Itzcoatl’s woman’
- (44) *te*:-*siwa*:-*w*  
UNSPEC:POSS:HUM-woman-POSSESSED  
‘someone’s woman’

With this comprehensive occurrence of the concept of unspecifiability, un-specifying object prefixes, an unspecifying reflexive prefix, and an unspeci-

A further implication of this analysis is that *wa*-verbs and *lo*-verbs will be given the same description: both types have an unspecifiable subject. The verb *koči:-wa* will then be understood to mean 'someone unspecifiable sleeps', and it is appropriately translated 'everyone or people sleep':

- (28') *koči:-wa*  
sleep-UNSPEC:SUBJ  
'everyone sleeps'

Additional support for the unspecifiable subject is provided by the above mentioned exceptionless rule that permits only one specifying object marker per ditransitive verb. The rule was exemplified by examples (11) and (12) that were shown to contrast with examples (9) and (10) in that the latter have one specifying and one unspecifying object prefix:

- |      |   |                   |                |                   |
|------|---|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (11) | <i>Ø-ne:č-Ø-maka</i>                    | <i>no-ta'č'in</i> | <i>in</i>      | <i>šo:č'il</i>    |
|      | 3:SUBJ-1SG:OBJ-3SG:OBJ-give             | 1SG:POSS-father   |                | the flower        |
|      | 'my father gives me the flower'         |                   |                |                   |
| (12) | <i>ni-k-Ø-maka</i>                      | <i>in</i>         | <i>šo:č'il</i> | <i>no-ta'č'in</i> |
|      | 1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-3SG:OBJ-give           | the               | flower         | 1SG:POSS-father   |
|      | 'I give (it) the flower to my father'   |                   |                |                   |
| (9)  | <i>ni-k-λa-maka</i>                     |                   |                | <i>no-ta'č'in</i> |
|      | 1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-give |                   |                | 1SG:POSS-father   |
|      | 'I give (him/her) my father "things"'   |                   |                |                   |
| (10) | <i>ni-k-te:-maka</i>                    |                   | <i>in</i>      | <i>šo:č'il</i>    |
|      | 1SG:SUBJ-3SG:OBJ-UNSPEC:OBJ:HUM-give    |                   | the            | flower            |
|      | 'I give (it) the flower away'           |                   |                |                   |

*Lo*-verbs derived from ditransitives likewise permit only one specifying prefix, namely one that refers to the promoted object which has acquired subject form; or — expressed differently — they permit no specifying object marker at all.

- (11') *ni-Ø-mak-o* *in* *šo:čiλ*  
 "1SG:SUBJ"-3SG:OBJ-give-UNSPEC:SUBJ the flower  
 'someone unspecified gives me the flower'
- (9') *Ø-λa-mak-o*  
 "3SG:SUBJ"-UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-give-UNSPEC:SUBJ  
 'someone unspecified gives him "things"'

In other words, precisely like in the active ditransitive constructions, the absence of an unspecifying object prefix indicates that there *is* a specifiable object; thus instead of the expected form \**ni-k-mak-o* we get the form in (11').

It may seem problematic to assign object function to prefixes that elsewhere indicate subject. However, whichever way *lo*-verbs are analyzed there will be some overlap in functions between subject and object prefixes. According to the traditional analysis the unspecified nonhuman object prefix *la-* may be assigned subject function as in example (31'):

- (31')     *la-k<sup>w</sup>a:-lo*  
              UNSPEC:SUBJ:NONHUM-eat-UNSPEC:SUBJ  
              'something is eaten'

whereas according to my analysis it continues to function as an unspecifying, nonhuman *object* marker:

- (31'')    *la-k<sup>w</sup>a:-lo*  
              UNSPEC:OBJ:NONHUM-eat-UNSPEC:SUBJ  
              'someone unspecified eats something'

#### 4. Conclusion

My claim is that *lo*-verbs in Classical Nahuatl are not passive forms and that *wa*-verbs are not impersonals, but that both are active forms that have an unspecifiable subject, indicated by the two suffixes, *-lo* and *-wa*, and that the nouns referred to by specifying subject prefixes in *lo*-verbs function as objects. I shall now sum up the arguments on which this claim is based:

1. *lo*-verbs can be formed from reflexive verbs and have an unspecifying reflexive prefix;
2. the agent cannot be expressed in constructions with *lo*-verbs;
3. unspecifiability is a pervasive feature in the language; unspecifiable object and unspecifiable possessor are expressed systematically;
4. an exceptionless rule that restricts the number of specifying object prefixes to one applies also to *lo*-verbs — if the prefix for promoted object is counted as an object prefix;
5. *lo*-verbs and *wa*-verbs will now receive the same analysis.

The concept of the unspecifiable subject that I find so exceptionally clearly illustrated in Nahuatl from the 16th century is definitely embraced by the

characteristics of passives and related constructions established through cross-linguistic studies. And my analysis is not fundamentally different from other treatments of *wa*-verbs and *lo*-verbs in Nahuatl. Demotion of subject, and “effacement du sujet” (Launey 1981), is completely in consonance with my “unspecifiable subject”. In his book on *Non-Distinct Arguments in Uto-Aztecan* Langacker (1976) demonstrates the extension of the discussed phenomena for the whole language family.

What I object to in those analyses is the use of the term passive; and terminology is not a matter to be treated lightly. I question the usefulness of lumping together quite diverse constructions from a great many of the languages of the world under the term passive.

Such lumping is a reflection of the age and tremendously deep roots of the traditional European linguistics; and the foundation of this our only linguistics with its attitudes has not been changed substantially by more recent studies of non-Indo-European languages, studies that are often used simply to confirm the appropriateness of our traditional inventory of concepts.

Discussions of “near universals” are dangerous; we find what we look for, or, in other words, our expectations influence our analysis, we distort data to make them fit the model; and with every exemplification of a “near universal” it is confirmed and fuel is added to the vicious circle.

In order to progress in our understanding of human language we need to focus on the specific phenomena in individual languages and test the few concepts that so far appear to be universal, but we want to be specifically cautious about the firmly cemented concepts that appear natural to us because they are so deeply rooted in our culture.

Let me conclude by answering my original question: what is it that we gain or lose by calling a certain construction in Nahuatl a passive? We gain little since the concept of passive contributes nothing to the description of Nahuatl.

On the contrary, we gain in our understanding of Nahuatl by analyzing it in accordance with the unique morphology of that language and by recognizing the systematic way of expressing the unspecifiable as something particularly characteristic of Nahuatl. And at least as important: by restricting and clarifying the definition and domain of the concept of passive to include only those that permit an optional agent we also here sharpen our insight.

## Notes

1. None of the examples are taken from existing texts from the 16th century. They are all typical linguist's examples, out of context; and the translations are equally unreal and in many cases unacceptable as English sentences.

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# **Grammaticalized focus in Yukagir**

**Is it really grammaticalized  
and is it really focus?**

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## **1. Introduction**

Yukagir's morphological focus system is doubtless the feature for which the language is best known to linguists (see for example Comrie 1981:258-261). It is otherwise a fairly typical agglutinating SOV language with only a moderately developed morphology.<sup>1</sup> It is still generally regarded as an isolate, although remote genetic relationships to Uralic and to Eskimo-Aleut have been suggested (cf. Collinder 1940 and Fortescue 1988 respectively). There are two extant 'dialects', (Upper) Kolyma and Tundra, which are at least as divergent as any two Scandinavian languages, lexically more so. Because of its elaborate focus system it is a language that has considerable potential interest for Functional Grammar. This interest is enhanced when one attempts to analyse from an FG perspective how the system actually works in texts and discovers that it is not really a matter of Focus in the FG sense of Dik (1989:277f.) at all — at least it only partially overlaps with it. The domain of focus in Yukagir covers more than just the morphological system of the language, moreover: also word-order variations from basic SOXV are involved. The question arises as to which pragmatic functions actually can be called 'grammaticalized' in this language — just the obligatory morphological choices or also more optional and sporadic word order variations?

## **2. The focus system of Tundra Yukagir**

The most detailed description of the Yukagir focus system is to be found in Krejnovich 1958, but the examples presented there are mostly isolated sen-

tences and the paradigms of the system are expressly given as answers to hypothetical Q-word questions, i.e. as examples of what Dik (1989:282) calls 'Completive Focus'. Comrie (1981:260) too presents the system in the same fashion, adding that its function is to indicate focus, 'i.e. essential new information'. I reproduce on Table 1 his Table 6.3, which shows the five basic paradigms of Tundra Yukagir, adding English glosses for the first item of each paradigm. According to J.S. Maslova (personal communication) Kolyma Yukagir lacks the subject focus construction with transitive verbs. Note that all verbs in Yukagir are inherently either transitive or intransitive, irrespective of the presence of an overt object (though in the Object Focus construction the object must be expressed). Similarly, subject constituents may be left out (except in the Subject Focus construction) if there is immediate topic continuity with the preceding context.<sup>2</sup>

The endings *-ek* and *-leng* (or *-le*) in the Subject Focus and Object Focus paradigms are special nominal focus markers (there is thus double marking of focus in these constructions). The second form (used on simple nouns) is probably from *l'e-* 'be', hence may reflect an earlier cleft construction. It is also used in nominal sentences of the type *ten nime-leng* 'this is a house' with noun *nime-* 'house'. Not to be confused with *-le(ng)* as a focus marker is its use as accusative marker on ordinary non-focused objects when the subject is also 3rd person in the transitive Verb Focus construction (see example sentence (10)). The presentation is somewhat simplified as regards the actual morphemes and allomorphs involved, but all the relevant categories are covered (they also apply to predicative adjectives). There is, however, one aspect of it that is misleading: the prefix *me(r)-* (*me-* before C) in the VF paradigms is not essential to the construction — in the Kolyma dialect it is in fact usually absent (appearing occasionally as a perfective aspectual marker rather), and in Tundra Yukagir it may be omitted when 'there is no special need for accentuating the verb' (Krejnovich 1958:121). I shall return to this point later.

When one turns to actual texts, the picture changes somewhat. First, the VF construction is far and away the most common construction in connected narrative discourse: out of the first 183 sentences of the longest single text I have available in Tundra Yukagir (Krejnovich 1958:255-262) there are only 6 instances of SF and 13 of OF, all the rest being VF. Moreover, examples of question-answer pairs illustrating 'completive focus' are rather rare in the narrative texts available (Krejnovich 1958 and 1982 and Jochelson 1900),<sup>3</sup> but the morphological system as such nevertheless pervades the material, so obviously something more is involved. The odd thing about the examples of answers in

Table 1: *The morphological Focus system*

## Intransitive

	Verb Focus	Subject Focus
1SG	met mer-uu-jeng ‘I go’	met-ek uu-l ‘I go’
2	tet mer-uu-jek	tet-ek uu-l
3	tudel mer-uu-j	tudel uu-l
1PL	mit mer-uu-jeli	mit-ek uu-l
2	tit mer-uu-jemut	tit-ek uu-l
3	tittel mer-uu-ngi	tittel uu-ngu-l

## Transitive

	Verb Focus	Subject Focus
1SG	met mer-ai-ng ‘I shot (s.th.)’	met ai ‘I shot (s.th.)’
2	tet mer-ai-mek	tet ai
3	tudel mer-ai-m	tud ai
1PL	mit mer-ai-j	mit ai
2	tit mer-ai-mk	tit ai
3	tittel mer-ai-nga	titt ai-ngu

## Object Focus

1SG	met ile-leng ai-meng ‘I shot the deer’
2	tet ile-leng ai-meng
3	tudel ile-leng ai-mele
1PL	mit ile-leng ai-l
2	tit ile-leng ai-mk
3	tittel ile-leng ai-ngumle

VF form (mainly answers to ‘why’ questions) is that **none** of them have the prefix *me(r)-* although one would a priori expect the ‘focus’ in such answers to lie upon the verb. This is illustrated in the following (all example sentences are from Krejnovich 1958 unless otherwise indicated):

- (1) a. *tett’ie mon-ni “nemengin’ gelu-k?”*  
rich:man say-3SG:VF why come-2SG:INTER  
‘The rich man said: Why did you come?’

- b. *tadāne mo-d'eng "met-ama met-qane pot'ese-j"*  
 then say-1SG:VF my-father me-LOC send-3SG:VF  
 'Then I said: My father sent me'.

The verb *pot'ese-* is transitive, note, and its object, being a 1st (or 2nd) person pronoun, regularly takes the locative case. For the time being I shall continue to gloss the so-called VF forms as just that, 'verb focus'. Note the lack of *me-* also on the VF forms *monni* and *mod'eng*. Facts such as these lead me to conclude that the VF paradigm — the forms without *me(r)-*, that is — is actually focus-neutral, in clear contrast to the SF and OF paradigms, where the focused constituents almost always introduce new information. In Krejnovich (1982: 216) there are examples (rare) of focused S and O constituents which are not actually new but which nevertheless signal a degree of narrative surprise (see the functions of NewTop discussed below) sufficient to override the lack of contextual newness. The new information is not necessarily — or even typically — contrastive or emphatic.<sup>4</sup> We generally appear to be dealing with a quite straightforward token of New Topic in the FG sense, as in example (2) (see note 7 for an example of SF):

- (2) *n'awn'iklie-jawul-ek juo-meng*  
 Arctic:fox-track-FOC see-1SG:OF  
 'I saw the track of an Arctic fox'.

Note that in VF sentences, on the other hand, an S or V, whether overt or not, need not necessarily be 'given' information, as in *mārqaṅ-göde monni* 'a man spoke', where the subject of the VF verb is clearly 'new' in the context (it consists of 'one' followed by and fused with 'man'). The identity of the man is unimportant, however, and he is not maintained as topic in what follows.

To sum up the position so far: rather than being a language in which every sentence is marked for completive (or contrastive) focus on one of its constituents, as descriptions suggest, it turns out that Yukagir is a language in which New Topic (whether applying to an S or an O) is morphologically marked both on the verb and on the nominal constituent concerned, whereas the so-called 'verb focus' construction (without *me(r)-*) is its unmarked or 'default' indicative paradigm. It expresses neither completive nor contrastive focus in most cases, though it may also be found in answers to Q-word questions concerning the predicate alone. Krejnovich (1982:182) describes the VF construction as that in which the verb is the rheme of the sentence, a statement that is quite compatible with the position I am here espousing.

### 3. A closer look at ‘verb focus’ in Tundra Yukagir

Before proceeding any further I need to present further evidence for my claim that VF is actually the unmarked indicative and not really an indicator of focus at all.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, it should be pointed out that the VF construction is nominative-accusative, whereas the OF and SF ones are ergative, the focus system being superimposed as it were upon upon an otherwise nominative-accusative clausal basis. I have examined Krejnovich’s text to see what proportion of VF forms are actually contrastive or completive in the sense of Dik. Note that according to the latter all instances of Focus must be either the one or the other (Dik 1989:282).<sup>6</sup> In the whole text I found no clear example of contrastive usage and only a couple of answers to ‘why’ questions. Here it was the whole predication, not just the verb that was questioned. Of course this is bound up with the nature of the text concerned (it represents the narrative register), and an investigation of spoken dialogue would undoubtedly have revealed a much higher percentage.

Then there is the matter of the presence/absence in the Tundra VF paradigm of prefix *me(r)-* alluded to above. Krejnovich (1958:132 and 150-151) states that this prefix is regularly absent in non-finite verb forms, in negative, optative and interrogative forms, and when the verb is qualified by a qualitative adverbial (actually also quantitative ones). The former kind of restriction is not surprising if we are dealing with an unmarked indicative as I claim: *me(r)-* would be adding something extra, namely some kind of foregrounding of the verb not compatible with modality other than the indicative. Such foregrounding would also be incompatible with adverbials modifying the verb in an essential way — they would rather be expected to draw the focus to themselves, as in (3):

- (3)      *met-en’ie    iral’aj-neng ed’i*  
             my-mother   hard-ADV   live:3SG:VF  
             ‘My mother had a hard life’.

The problem is to specify the kind of focusing/foregrounding that *me(r)-* contributes. Krejnovich (1982:190) calls it ‘assertive’, but this is simply because it cannot co-occur with the negative prefix *el’-*. It is not simply contrastive, nor is it necessarily completive, as it can be present or absent irrespective of such factors (which are relatively rare in the texts, as I have mentioned). In fact, about half the VF forms in Krejnovich’s text are without *me(r)-*. It is also regularly absent on the VF form *monni* ‘he said’ before a direct discourse quotation, as we have seen in (1a), where the verb is obvious-

ly of less semantic weight than the quoted material following. The conditions under which *me(r)-* does occur are not easy to pinpoint, though Krejnovich has it always present in his ‘completive’ examples. As we have seen in section 2, he also states that *me(r)-* does not occur — apart from in the clearly defined cases just mentioned — ‘when there is no special need for accentuating the verb’. It appears to be particularly likely to be present if there is an overt S or O or nominal X (an oblique case-marked or postpositional referring phrase) also present in the sentence — and this in turn is a matter of topic continuity. One could thus suppose that it represents real ‘verb focus’, or perhaps the absence of stress on any nominal constituent rather. However, the situation is probably more complicated than that since ‘verb focus’ is occasionally marked by *me(r)-* when there is no such overt nominal constituent. The precise factors leading to such instances are yet to be determined. There are in fact examples in the texts of non-contrastive/non-completive VF without *me(r)-* where it seems to be a matter of sentential emphasis of the type expressed by ‘indeed’ in English:

- (4) a. *me-ponre-t’eli*  
 VF-go:away-1PL:VF  
 ‘(And indeed) we went away’.

This comes in a context where another character (the narrator’s mother) has just suggested that the two of them leave their wealthy employers, using the same verb in the corresponding VF form without *me(r)-* as an optative: *ponre-t’eli* ‘let’s go away’.

All this suggests that we should change the analysis of VF forms so that those without *me(r)-* are simply marked as INDIC (and SF and OF forms be marked SF.INDIC and OF.INDIC respectively). (4a), for example, can be re-analysed as:

- (4) b. *me-ponre-t’eli*  
 VF-go:away-1PL:INDIC

The function of *me(r)-* when not ‘completive’ (focusing on the verb alone) can thus be said to foreground the whole predication as bearing the main narrative line forward. In the present analysis I shall call the ‘emic’ function associated with *me(r)-* Predicational Focus. By ‘emic’ I mean pertaining to a language-specific grammatical category as opposed to the wider range of ‘etic’ functions to which elements expressing such categories may be put in actual discourse contexts.

#### 4. Word order in Yukagir

The broad Prague School notion of Communicative Dynamism (CD) gives useful leverage on understanding word-order variation in Yukagir, the other side of the pragmatic articulation of the sentence in that language. It involves a weaker sense of 'focus' than that of the morphological system, one concerning the degree of freedom that remains after the obligatory effects of choices within the latter have been accounted for. I have examined all examples of deviation from strict Frame-S-O-X-V ordering in Krejnovich's Tundra text. Yukagir is somewhat less rigid in its word ordering than English but more so than West Greenlandic. Variation of the basic or 'neutral' pattern (mostly postposing of NPs after the verb) does not have a very high functional load, perhaps precisely because the morphological focal system covers most of the ground itself. Krejnovich (1982:270f.) gives examples of such variation but does not go further than to describe it as 'subjective' and 'expressive'. In particular, postposing does not appear to be utilized to indicate marked New Topics as in West Greenlandic (Fortescue 1994:270).

Postposing performs a function in Yukagir that I shall call, following Hanay (1983), *Emphatic Focus* or *EmphFoc*. Especially common is the postposing of adverbial material — including oblique case-marked nominal phrases. This is not surprising since such constituents are not involved in the morphological focus system as such (case-marked adverbial NPs can take emphatic suffix *-ng* however). They are rather often postposed — at least in the Tundra dialect — when they express what Firbas calls 'specification' (Firbas 1992:345) in the type of sentence where the verb has 'quality-assigning' (as opposed to 'presentational') function.<sup>7</sup> This may represent essential information without which the predicate cannot be said to be complete and thus bear the maximal CD within the sentence as 'rheme proper'. Such material follows the universal tendency for constituents bearing the highest CD to come last in the sentence (that is, when allowed by the grammar of the specific language concerned). The verb, bearing less CD than the following 'specification', may thus fulfil a merely 'transitional' function. The material concerned may be 'given' in a global sense, but what counts is the **immediate** context, as Firbas stresses, i.e. any referring expression here should be different from the immediate topic at that point in the text. It could have been introduced for the first time several topic shifts back.

An example of one kind of *EmphFoc* postposing is found in (5):

- (5)      *me-kewe-t'eng*                  *tett'ie-ngin'*  
          VF-go:off-1SG:INDIC    rich:man-ALL  
          'I went off to the rich man'.

The postposed X is here 'given' in the preceding sentence, where the narrator's father tells him to go and work for the rich man. The CD of the sentence is concentrated on the final X phrase, the predicate being 'transitional' in Firbas' sense, yet the verb nevertheless has the VF marker *me-*. This would seem to be a case of the same kind of sentential/predicate focus I glossed in (4a) as 'indeed'. The verb repeats — or, as here, rephrases — the verb of the preceding sentence.

In (6) a typical example is given where the X represents immediately new — although globally 'given' — material; the sentence exemplifies the OF construction.

- (6)      *labunme-le*      *qalRatej-meng*                  *nonol-Rat*  
          ptarmigan-FOC   release-1SG:OF:INDIC    snare-ABL  
          'I released (unexpectedly) a ptarmigan from (the) snare'.

The last mention of the snare was seven sentences back, across several topic shifts. The immediate context is a question put by the narrator's mother as to why he is crying. The main CD of the sentence can be said to lie on the focused object — i.e. the morphological system overrides word-order in this respect. The X constituent is nevertheless postposed as having relatively high CD, as an essential completion of the rest of the sentence. Such postposing of an X is common with the OF construction — in fact the normal position for a focused object or subject (noun, pronoun or Q-word) is immediately before the verb, so any X constituent will be excluded from this, its otherwise normal position and placed either after the verb (as here) or before the focused constituent, as in (9) below.<sup>8</sup>

Also S and O constituents may be positioned after the V in the VF construction when they contain higher CD than the verb itself, as in (7):

- (7)      *tadat*    *mer-uo-ng*                  *n'awn'iklie-d'ul*  
          then   VF-cook-1SG:INDIC    Arctic:fox-meat  
          'Then I cooked (the) fox meat'.

The immediately preceding context here describes how the narrator caught two foxes, skinned them and lit a fire. It is obvious that he is going to cook them. Perhaps 'fox meat' can be regarded as a SubTop inferrable from 'fox' in such a context — for a Yukagir, that is. The OF construction would have been inappropriate here since 'fox meat' is not a brand new NewTop.



Not all cases of postposing are of this sort, however — there are also instances of ‘Tail’ material, elaborating or clarifying the predication or some part of it. In written texts it may be difficult to distinguish between the two cases; in (8), with a postposed S, the comma is Krejnovich’s:

- (8) *n’aRa me-kewe-t’eli, met en’ie-n’eng*  
 together VF-go:off-1PL:INDIC I mother-COMM  
 ‘I went off together with my mother’.

As regards the preposing of an X (i.e. a satellite containing a referring nominal) before an S or O constituent, the basic principle seems to be the natural one of positioning here material that has a stronger anaphoric link to context than the other constituents of the sentence — I shall call this Frame<sub>2</sub> as distinct from stage-setting adverbs and conjunctions, which I call Frame<sub>1</sub>. It would seem to correspond to the function ‘Stager’ in Hannay (1991:146). This is particularly common in the OF construction, where, as mentioned, the O is NewTop and finds its natural position just before the verb, away from the beginning of the sentence, as in (9), which also contains an initial Frame<sub>1</sub> constituent:

- (9) *tāl’ellede met-lalime-Rat kil-labunme-k*  
 then my-sledge-ABL two-ptarmigan-FOC  
*seure-meng*  
 bring:in-1SG:OF:INDIC  
 ‘Then I brought in two ptarmigans from my sledge’.

The narrator’s sledge has not been mentioned overtly before but it can be inferred that he has arrived on one, having been out hunting.

More rarely, an O is found preposed before S, as in (10), which occurs in a context where the narrator has been talking about the Chukchis he is journeying with but in the immediately preceding sentence introduces some new people; the former are therefore more deeply rooted in the context than the latter:

- (10) *tun-t’upt’e-pu-le tu-d’ing me-lögite-nga*  
 these-Chukchi-PL-OBJ these-people VF-feed-3PL:INDIC  
*me-merās-nga wien-sukun-ek*  
 VF-clothe-3PL:INDIC other-clothing-OBJ  
 ‘These people fed the Chukchis and gave them (new) clothes’.

This is, then, a case of a GivTop preposed to P1: this occurs when there are two GivTops in the same sentence, the one **most** given, i.e. deeply anchored in the preceding text, coming first. The same sentence also illustrates

the difference in pragmatic force between preposing and postposing NP constituents (the object constituent in the second clause represents EmphFoc); this can also be seen in (11), which contains both at once, but here, as more commonly, with two X's rather than core arguments:

- (11)     *māt'e-lek*    *met-kedel*    *me-wārej-ng*  
           lasso-INSTR my-body    VF-pull:across-1SG:INDIC  
           *enudie-ngumde-ngin'*  
           river-other:side-ALL  
           'With the lasso I pulled myself across to the other side of the river'.

The first X is firmly anchored in the preceding text (the nominal referent was introduced a few sentences back), whereas the postposed one, functioning as EmphFoc, is an essential new part of the predication, indicating the goal and purpose of the event concerned.

## 5. Fitting Yukagir into the FG framework

A number of problems have to be faced now when relating what has been said so far to the existing FG formalism. As in my analysis of word-ordering principles in West Greenlandic (Fortescue 1994), I shall concentrate on marked emic pragmatic functions (other than Tail), as grammaticalized in the specific language Yukagir. These are presented on Table 2, which should not be taken as complete (for instance, other means of expressing Emphatic Focus than by word order are omitted and the etic function 'cataphoric' may well be relevant on NewTop and/or EmphFoc). Each of these expression categories can in turn be seen to realize a number of potential etic discourse features (or 'micro-functions') of the discourse situation — in square brackets on Table 2. This would seem to represent a useful way of recognizing the fact that the same emic means may be used for a variety of etic ends, often more than one at once.

The unmarked cases are not of great importance here, actually being indicative of lack of any special pragmatic content: they do not involve the element of 'special treatment' that Dik (1989:266) associates with both Focus and Topic. They are 'defaults' which would not be called NewTop, etc., at all in standard FG. Thus the default means of introducing a new topic in discourse is by an overt NP in a neutral VF sentence (as opposed to zero anaphora for

Table 2: *Pragmatic functions in Yukagir*

Unmarked	NewTop	GivTop	Frame <sub>1</sub>		
Expressed by:	(ref. NP in unmarked position)	(verbal infl. alone)	(framing adv./conj.)		
Marked	NewTop	GivTop	EmphFoc	PredFoc	Frame <sub>2</sub>
Expressed by:	OF, SF	ref. NP S or O	postposed NP or adv.	<i>me(r)-</i>	preposed obl. NP
	[(brand) new] [important] [complet.] [contrast] [surprising]	[anaph.] [resumed] [inferred]	[important]	[complet.] [foreground]	[anaph.]

an unmarked given topic). Even EmphFoc could be said to have an unmarked counterpart, namely the head verb of the sentence, on which such emphasis lies in the default case. The marked categories, on the other hand, match formal marking with content markedness, as expressed by the relevant etic features below them on Table 2: they represent the language-specific clusters of universal functions — prototypes, if you will — expressed by the associated structures, as determined by abductive investigation. The category GivTop, for example, indicates when marked something more than just being a discourse topic (a referring expression in general): it indicates some particular relevance at that point in the discourse. Whether marked or not, it can be applied to an S or an O or to both in one sentence.<sup>9</sup> In Yukagir marked Frame<sub>2</sub> is distinct from unmarked Frame<sub>1</sub> (conjunctions and anaphoric adverbials finding their normal place at the beginning of the sentence) in so far as it is realized by oblique case-marked nominal expressions normally found in the neutral position for X constituents just before the verb (for the category ‘Frame’ compare de Vries 1992:3f.). It is, in Firbas’ terms, part of the Theme (the part of the sentence with lowest CD), more specifically corresponding to his ‘Set’, as discussed in note 7. Note that ‘resumed’, ‘inferred’, ‘completive’ and ‘contrastive’ are regarded here as etic micro-functions, i.e. specific uses to which the language-specific categories GivTop, NewTop and PredFoc in Yukagir may

be put. We have already seen in sentences (5) and (6) how the marked categories can interact, i.e. be represented in one and the same sentence.

Yukagir makes limited use of special P1 and P0 positions, as in West Greenlandic. The former, preposed position appears to be limited to anaphoric NPs — usually Frame<sub>2</sub> satellites but occasionally also GivTops. The postposed position P0 is limited to material assigned EmphFoc, with higher CD than the verb, which in the unmarked case (like in West Greenlandic) comes sentence-finally. There is also a P2 position just before the verb, reserved for oblique/-adverbial X constituents unless filled by a focused S or O. This gives the overall sentence template Frame-P1-S-O-P2-V-P0-Tail, where all positions except the verb are optional (and Frame is for Frame<sub>1</sub> constituents as described).

As to representing the various possibilities for expressing pragmatic functions in Yukagir in terms of FG sentential formulae, there is no particular problem with the SF and OF constructions, where the terms concerned are simply marked NewTop, as for example — somewhat simplified — in formula (12) representing SF *metek uul* on Table 1:

$$(12) \quad \text{Ind } e_i: [\text{uu-}_{\text{Vintr}} (\text{met})_{\text{AgNewTop}}]$$

The expression rules, if they operate centrifugally on successive layers and their satellites and operators as Dik (1989:308) claims they do, ensure that the full verbal form will be determined only at the level at which Ind, the extended predicate operator of objective modality, occurs, choosing the appropriate verbal paradigm. Here the SF form is chosen after NewTop has already triggered focal marker *-ek* to be attached to the subject. In the absence of the NewTop tag on one of the core arguments the default (VF) indicative would have been triggered.

Nor is there any difficulty marking EmphFoc on satellites as in (13), corresponding to (6):

$$(13) \quad \text{Ind } e_i: [\text{qalRatej-}_{\text{Vtr}} (\text{ls})_{\text{Ag}} (\text{labunme-})_{\text{GoNewTop}}] (\text{nonol-})_{\text{SoEmphFoc}}$$

But what of the so-called ‘verb focus’ construction? First, the ‘completive’ example given in Table 1, *met meruujeng* could be represented as in (14), with PredFoc marked on the verb:

$$(14) \quad \text{Ind } e_i: [\text{uu-}_{\text{VintrPredF}} (\text{met})_{\text{Ag}}]$$

In the case of the corresponding construction lacking *me(r)-*, which I have argued merely indicates the unmarked indicative, the following representation seems obvious:

$$(15) \quad \text{Ind } e_i: [\text{uu-}_{\text{Vintr}} (\text{met})_{\text{Ag}}]$$

A more complicated case arises with the *me(r)*-VF construction used for sentential emphasis, as in (5), glossable as '(indeed) I went off to the rich man'. I propose the following representation, where the label PredFoc is attached to the predicate as in (14), even though this is etically understood as referring to the whole predication (by pragmatic inferencing) and EmphFoc is attached to the source satellite:

- (16) Ind e<sub>i</sub>: [kewe-<sub>VintrPredFoc(1s)<sub>Ag</sub></sub>] (tett'ie-)<sub>SoEmphFoc</sub>

The question that arises with such an analysis is whether PredFoc and EmphFoc actually need to be distinguished, since their scope is always distinct, a predicate in the former case and a term (or adverbial) in the latter. Just Foc in both cases would be sufficient in so far as the means of expression concerned depends entirely upon the domain concerned, but of course two 'identical' foci in one sentence is not particularly desirable a solution. This is a matter I shall return to below.

## 6. The grammaticalization of pragmatic functions

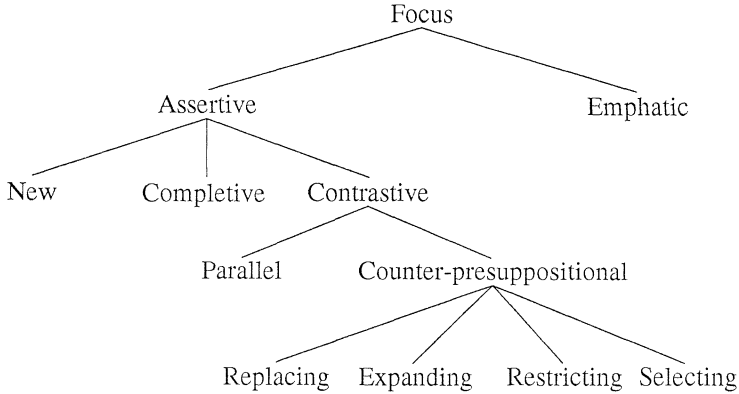
To grasp how language-specific the emic categories used in the analysis above actually are it is useful to compare the category NewTop in Yukagir and West Greenlandic: is this category exactly the same in the two cases? If not, what is common to them? Naturally the means by which they are expressed are not identical; moreover, they are not obligatorily utilized to the same degree. But beyond that, just what do I mean by NewTop in Yukagir, for example? It is not just the 'newness' of the constituent thus marked, for also unfocused nominal constituents in the VF construction may be 'new' in the immediate context. There is also an element of discourse-context foregrounding beyond mere newness. This is indicated by the etic feature 'important' on Table 2. Is this the same as the feature of that name indicated also for EmphFoc, where, as we have seen, it is a matter of relatively higher CD than the verb? I would claim that it is. This is precisely the point in distinguishing universal etic features, no single one of which is necessarily criterial for triggering a particular emic category in a given language. They rather combine with other such universal features of human discourse to produce a distinctive cluster which defines the emic function concerned. NewTop in West Greenlandic, for instance, is not associated with the etic features 'contrastive' and 'completive' as the emic category of that name is in Yukagir.

What I would like to propose, then, is that although etic functions may be

related on a universally valid hierarchy, emic ones can not usefully be represented in this fashion since they may overlap both in terms of means of expression and in terms of content. They are nevertheless discrete within the overall grammar of the individual language. On Figure 1 is one hierarchical way of representing the overall domain of Focus (compare it with the diagram on p. 282 of Dik 1989, to which I have added Hannay's Assertive/Emphatic distinction discussed below). Features concerning topic management alone (e.g. etic functions associated with GivTop) are not included.

On Figure 1 'New' is the etic feature ingredient in NewTop, and does not indicate Dik's New Focus (Dik 1989:282), which is identical to his Completive Focus — see my etic feature 'completive'. Compare also Mackenzie & Keizer (1991:211) for the suggestion that has been made within FG of treating NewTop as a variety of Focus: in their strictly binary classification they treat it as a 'presentative' sub-variety of 'completive (contextually new) focus'.<sup>10</sup> Assertive Focus, which corresponds to the part of the sentence bearing maximal CD in Prague School theory (Rheme Proper), covers according to Hannay (1983: 210) those varieties of focus concerned with what is new for the addressee in the given setting, as opposed to Emphatic Focus, which is a matter of importance or salience irrespective of the given-new parameter. In Yukagir, leaving aside PredFoc, which is not part of the ergatively organized focus system at all, the distinction corresponds to that between morphological focus (NewTop) and all other types of focus (EmphFoc); the latter may be realized by word order, by special 'emphatic' suffixes (corresponding to English 'even', 'also', 'as for', 'just', '(him)self', etc.) or presumably also by intonation (a matter on which I have no information, however).

It remains an open question here whether there is really just one emic category 'EmphFoc' in Yukagir or whether there should be a separate sub-category for each of the emphatic suffix types, for example. Similarly, sub-varieties of the etic category of that name with universal applicability may well be discernible, with one or more of which specific emic sub-categories would be associated, although there is no guarantee that any real language would match just those distinctions emically. It would seem to be desirable at all events to make a clearer distinction between universal etic and grammaticalized/language-specific emic functions within FG in general. In doing so it will also be necessary to decide whether questions of the 'scope' of Focus (see Dik 1989: 281) should be allowed to dictate distinctions between emic functions that otherwise seem to be 'etically' the same. For example, is PredFoc just a sub-

Figure 1: *The etic Focus hierarchy*

variety of EmphFoc, as hinted at in connection with the discussion of formula (16) above? In so far as these two emic categories in Yukagir, besides having distinct scope domains, each have their own distinct expression and their distinct cluster of associated etic sub-functions, I prefer to keep them separate. At a more abstract level they could still be analysed as varieties of the same (emphatic) Focus in complementary distribution as regards their scope.

The two major types of focus may combine in one sentence, as in the following from Krejnovich (1982:221), which occurs in a context where an old man and his wife are revealing to the hero how he can get his horse to take him anywhere that he wishes by magical means; the man has just finished speaking:

- (17)     *apanalā-ngoldaRane*     *jawlaRande*     *t'ald'edarime-Ra*  
           old:woman-as:for        left            palm-LOC  
           *ul'ege-die-k*     *tadi-mle*  
           leaf-small-FOC   give-3SG:OF:INDIC  
           'As for the old woman, she put a small leaf into the palm of his hand.'

There is Assertive (NewTop) Focus on the object and special Emphatic Focus (irrespective of newness) on the subject, as marked by suffix *-ngoldaRane*.

The varieties of Focus on Figure 1 should be taken as belonging to the universal description of discourse management. I hesitate to call such an area of

study 'discourse grammar' since it is precisely **not** a matter of grammaticalization in any real language; it is a matter of a theory of 'dynamic verbal interaction' as opposed to static grammatical description (see Mackenzie & Keizer 1991:171). Each specific language associates a selection of such universal discourse factors with the means of expression available to it. The fit can probably never be exact since the means available to a given language will presumably always underdetermine the richness of their potential uses in the service of the pragmatic articulation of discourse.

It appears then that Yukagir's 'focus system' can indeed be seen as a matter of Focus in the widest sense — though the FG notion of Focus needs to be both broadened and further differentiated along the lines suggested by Hannay and by Mackenzie & Keizer for this to be evident.<sup>11</sup> What is unusual in Yukagir is the morphological expression of the marked core categories in this domain — i.e. when the etic features of the on-going discourse associated with them are activated above some threshold level (for example 'new' plus 'important' in the case of NewTop, both of them gradable). As we have seen, this does not exhaust the means available for the expression of Focus in Yukagir however — there is also the additional parameter of deviation from basic word order, as in West Greenlandic, though much less utilized than in that language. West Greenlandic in turn has no morphological means of expressing pragmatic functions (apart from the enclitic construction required for identifying/selective focus). One may well ask whether the obligatory (e.g. morphological) part and the more optional (e.g. word ordering) part of the expression of pragmatic functions have the same status. In other words, is it a matter of grammaticalization in both cases? If formal categories of any sort exist to express them, I am afraid that this is simply so and that we must live with different degrees of grammaticalization of pragmatic functions. Thus the grammatical indication of marked NewTop subjects and objects in Tundra Yukagir is obligatory but not that of PredFoc on the verb, even though the latter is also a matter of morphology (prefix *me(r)-*). There would appear to be some degree of variability in the use of that prefix, but not as much as in purely word order choices (apart from the positioning of focused O or S just before the verb); for example, what is expressed as Tail elaboration or afterthought by one speaker might have been treated by another — or by the same speaker at another time — as an integral part of the predication (e.g. as Given Topic). The difference between 'obligatory' and 'optional' would seem to be one of degree — these may well be explicable in dynamic discourse terms of weightings and thresholds but that does not help us draw the line as to what is grammaticalized or not in a given language.



A further complication arises with the ‘marked’ versus ‘unmarked’ distinction. One position — close to the one I adopted in section 5 above — is to ignore the (structurally) unmarked cases, claiming that they really indicate absence of pragmatic function in as far as they are default morphosyntactic ‘settings’ which have no synchronic functionality, though they often do reflect functional historical roots. Another is to break down illocutions into different sub-types, each associated with a different array of pragmatic functions, optional or not. In Yukagir, for instance, the category NewTop is not relevant for imperative sentences (the OF and SF constructions are impossible). In this vein Hannay (1991) discusses the distinct declarative TOPIC, ALL-NEW and PRESENTATIVE ‘modes’ (amongst others relevant to English). Only the former is associated (obligatorily) with a GivTop, while all of them have a Focus (in the presentative case corresponding to Dik’s NewTop). These three ‘modes’ certainly seem relevant to Yukagir too, where Topic mode is associated with marked GivTop and Presentative mode with marked NewTop — in what Krejnovich calls the ‘rhematic object and subject’ constructions.<sup>12</sup>

Another kind of problem concerning markedness and grammaticalization arises in the case of the P2 position in Yukagir, utilized, as we have seen, for oblique/adverbial constituents when not filled by a focused S or O. Since the filling of the position by such a focused constituent is part and parcel of the OF and SF constructions (for NewTop), can it be regarded as a grammatical/emic category in its own right? Not according to the principles employed in this paper, since there is no independent choice involved.

Such considerations lead me to propose a scale of grammaticalization of pragmatic functions, going from the most grammaticalized to the least as follows:

- unmarked functions (obligatory default values, synchronically largely arbitrary morphosyntactic patterns)
- marked functions (choices that are available for given discourse goals)
- clashes between pragmatic functions and grammar as such.<sup>13</sup>

The inverse link between markedness and obligatoriness should be clear, but note that the central region of the scale may contain means of expression varying widely as regards degree of obligatoriness. The sense of ‘markedness’ used here refers, note, to emic expression categories in a given language, not to universal etic ones (relatable, for example to textual frequency).

There must, at all events, be a limit to the degree of specificity with which one can integrate the pragmatic articulation of utterances in context into a

strictly grammatical description. The most useful place to draw the line, I would suggest, is precisely between the emic and the etic (or between ‘content form’ and ‘content substance’ in Hjelmslevian terms), as I have done in this paper and in my work on West Greenlandic word order. This means focusing on the central (marked) region of the scale proposed above. Etic functions in wider discourse contexts can be drawn upon to explain and validate the language-specific emic ones that the individual grammar contains, but need not be part of any static grammatical description.

## Notes

1. It does not, for example, display object incorporation like neighbouring Chukchi, though it does have incorporation-like fusion of nominals with preceding adjectival and other modifiers.
2. This is less general than in West Greenlandic, however, in which the overt presence of any pronominal subject is marked. Topic tracking is supplemented by a switch reference system in West Greenlandic, lacking an analogue in Yukagir.
3. In fact I have not found any examples at all in the texts of completive focus on the verb in answer to questions like ‘What did he do?’, as in Krejnovich’s isolated example sentences. Such questions, note, are in the OF form, as in *nemele wiete-meng* ‘what will you do?’. The answer, as we have seen, will be in the VF form, which is also the form used in questions and answers about NPs in the instrumental and other oblique cases of the type ‘What did he do it with?’ (the answer to the latter type may sometimes also be in the OF form — see Krejnovich 1958:88). Compare the completive use of the SF (or OF) construction in ‘identifying’ contexts such as:

<i>kin-ek</i>	<i>Ewenge-ngol-el</i>	→	<i>met-ek</i>	<i>Ewenge-ngol-el</i>
who-FOC	Ewenge-be-3SG:SF:INTER		I-FOC	Ewenge-be-1SG:SF:INDIC
‘Who is Ewenge?’.		→	‘I am Ewenge’.	

4. That the SF and OF constructions may nevertheless be used contrastively is illustrated by the following OF sentence from Krejnovich, where it is the ‘incorporated’ adjective alone that undergoes restrictive Focus:

*met amat’ed-ile-k el’-bun’-meng*  
 ‘It wasn’t a good reindeer that I killed’.

Here the complex noun phrase object has the appropriate focus-marker *-k* attached and the verb is in the expected transitive OF form. This appears to be the only construction where the negative prefix *el’-* does not take inflections similar to the intransitive VF construction. It otherwise goes with such VF inflections even when the verb is transitive,

as in *met ileng el'bund'eng* 'I didn't kill a reindeer', where the predication is negated (note that constituent negation is also possible in this latter case, with *el-* directly attached to the object).

5. Note that the basic 'tense' appearing in Comrie's paradigms, which he calls 'past' (and Krejnovich 'aorist') is actually a bare indicative, as in West Greenlandic, referring to past or present (as opposed to the morphologically marked future).
6. 'Parallel Focus', a sub-variety of Contrastive Focus, can also be found in Yukagir, as in:

*mārqalet met-abut'ien dading, mārqalet met-qait'ien dading*  
 'I gave one to my grandmother and one to my grandfather'.

This is the ordinary VF construction (repeated in each clause), without *me(r)-* and with the allative case X nominal in its usual place after the object. In other words, this does not have special emic status in Yukagir.

7. As an example of Firbas' 'presentational' sentence type, consisting of Set (setting) - Pr (presentation) - Ph (phenomenon) observe the following, in the SF construction as expected (the subject is the 'phenomenon' and the 'set' element is lacking — or rather understood from context):

*labunme-le kōt'id'i-nu-l*  
 ptarmigan-FOC jump-FREQ-3SG:SF:INDIC  
 'A ptarmigan was jumping about (in it)'.

This follows a sentence describing the narrator going to look at the snare he has set. Compare also (9), where the 'set' (Frame<sub>2</sub>) element is present and the 'phenomenon' is the object.

8. Exceptions do occur, however, where other factors override the placement of a focused S or O immediately before the verb, as in the following from Krejnovich's text:

*n'awn'iklie-le met-kapkan-Ra eju-l*  
 fox-FOC my-trap-LOC be:caught-3SG:SF:INDIC  
 'A fox got caught in my trap'.

The reason the focused subject has been placed in initial position here may be that at this point in the narrative the fox is not new to the reader/listener (we have just been told that it was caught), but it is new to the addressee of the utterance **within** the narrative, namely the speaker's mother, to whom he addresses it. There is, in other words, a clash between NewTop assignment (and its obligatory grammatical consequences) and the givenness/anaphoric status (GivTop?) of the constituent concerned. A clearer example of this is seen in the following from Krejnovich (1982:239), where the focused object *tangut* 'that' is actually an anaphoric demonstrative (which cannot take focus suffixes and appears in its ordinary object form) though the referent is being put in a new — and contrastive — context in the sentence:

*tangut met n'ienu-lbun'-meng tet-in'*  
 that I request-want-1SG:OF:INDIC you-ALL  
 '(It's) **that** (girl) I want to request (lit. 'call') for you'.

9. Thus the following VF sentence from Krejnovich's text:

*met-en'ie n'awn'ikliele mepun'im*  
 'My mother killed the fox'.

Here the subject *meten'ie* 'mother' and the object *n'awn'ikliele* 'fox' (distinguished by the OBJ marker *-le*) have just been named in the preceding context, the mother immediately before and the fox 'resumed' from two sentences back. If the two topics had been unmarked the sentence would just have consisted of the final verb. See Hannay (1991:139) for other exceptions to the principle that there should only be one Topic per sentence, e.g. in Hungarian and various Slavic languages. Cases of a **single** constituent appearing to take more than one pragmatic function at once should probably be regarded as a matter of 'clashes' (see note 8).

10. But unlike English in their analysis (and like West Greenlandic), Yukagir does appear to be a language in which New and Given Topic are both relevant emic categories, distinct in expression from (other kinds of) Focus. In general, the pragmatic function New Topic appears to occupy a middle ground between Given Topic (which anchors a referential constituent in preceding context but not calling further attention to it) and Emphatic Focus (which calls the listener/reader's attention to a particularly important constituent). New Topic partakes of both, combining 'importance' with relevance to the on-going elaboration of the topic framework.
11. It should perhaps further be pointed out that focus is quite independent of syntactic function assignment in Yukagir, which has a full syntactic passive construction (with the agent in the instrumental). Thus Maslova (1989:18) gives examples like the following of the interaction of passivization and focus assignment:

*uor-pe-leng n'ie-juol-ngul*  
 child-PL-FOC all-PASS-3PL:SF:INDIC  
 'The **children** were called'.

The agent, if present, may also be focused (e.g. with SF focus form *met* '(by) me' and without the focus marker on the subject in the example above).

12. Hannay's REACTION mode (for answers) is probably also relevant here, a completive context calling forth either the NewFoc or the PredFoc category in Yukagir.
13. See for example Fortescue (1987) for an investigation of the occasional overriding of 3rd versus 4th person marking in West Greenlandic by pragmatic factors — in particular the discrepancy between long-term 'topic entity' (main actant) and grammatical 'subject'. Whether such sporadic phenomena are a matter for the grammar as such is a moot point. My own position is that they are not, but rather form part of a language-specific theory

of discourse. Wichmann (1992:22f.), however, uses the term ‘global topic’ for rather similar cases in Tlapanec, treating this as an emic (grammatical) category. Compare also under note 8.

## Abbreviations

ABL	ablative case
ADV	adverb
ALL	allative case
FOC	focus
FREQ	frequentive
INDIC	indicative
INTER	interrogative
OF	object focus
PASS	passive
PL	plural
SF	subject focus
SG	singular
TR	transitive
VF	verb focus

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