

*On Unaccusativity: Clause Types and Verb Types Reconsidered*¹

Enrique BERNARDEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some proposals put forward by Amaya Mendikoetxea in a recent article. After considering the meaning of 'functional models' in linguistics, the need for them to integrate the Unaccusative Hypothesis, as propounded by Generative Grammar and pictured in Mendikoetxea's article, is questioned as it does not seem to be a real breakthrough in our understanding and explanation of linguistic facts from the functional and cognitive point of view. An interpretation of (in)transitivity in gradualistic terms is preferred instead within the general framework of cognitive-functional models of grammar. The main 'diagnoses' for the unaccusative hypothesis considered in Mendikoetxea's paper are briefly analysed. As a general conclusion, the facts the Unaccusative Hypothesis tries to explain can be better understood in semantic and pragmatic rather than syntactic terms.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an article published in Issue Nr. 3 of *EIUC*, A. Mendikoetxea (1995) faces some grammatical problems whose interest is beyond doubt and which lead to the necessary reconsideration of such traditional grammatical concepts as **(in)transitivity**, **Subject**, and **Object**. After a brief consideration of some types of grammar (descriptive, pedagogical, and theoretical) she proposes the introduction of the concept of **unaccusativity** in functional models of grammar, even pointing to its usefulness for L2 teaching.

In this article, I intend to address the issue raised in Mendikoetxea's article, considering some alternative analyses. I shall basically follow the same

order used by Mendikoetxea (I shall be referring to her as AM for the sake of brevity), as it will enable me to restate her main points from a quite different perspective. I shall not attempt a full critical consideration of the Unaccusative Hypothesis as it has been developed in David Perlmutter's original Relational Grammar approach or in Generative Grammar at large, but shall limit myself to the points touched upon by AM.

As I understand it, AM's article makes the following basic claims: (a) functional grammars need the grammatical categories of S(ubject) and O(bject) for their typologies of clauses; (b) S and O can better be understood as derived, not primitive, categories, as in Generative Grammar; (c) certain syntactic facts need the introduction of special classes of verbs, viz. unaccusative and ergative; (d) this need is shown by the analysis of certain syntactic constructions; (e) it is convenient for functional, descriptive models of grammar to introduce those types of verbs as substitutes for their analyses of the clause.

In Section 2 I shall discuss AM's presentation of functional grammars. In Section 3 the current view on Syntactic Functions in functional and functional-cognitive grammars will be shown not to coincide with AM's presentation. Section 4 will then be devoted to a brief analysis of the two diagnostic tests for unaccusativity adduced by AM.

It may seem odd for a reply to be longer than the paper it discusses. I think, however, that the issue is of enough importance and that a consideration and clarification of the points AM faces in her article is indeed necessary. For some (probably sociological rather than scientific) reason, the 'discoveries' made by the formal models of grammar are automatically assumed to have to be discussed in the non-formal approaches too, i.e. in the functional and (functional)-cognitive models, under the assumption that they also necessarily affect them. The opposite, however, is never true: that is, the formal models only extremely seldom, if ever, discuss the 'discoveries' made by functional or cognitive grammars, except perhaps for their cursory disqualification, as they consider them out of their own field of interest. For instance, I know of no serious discussion or comment on Gilles Fauconnier's cognitive 'Mental Spaces' model (1984/1995) from the formal field, and the same can be said about most proposals by Simon Dik and other proponents of Functional Grammar. The main point I intend to make here is that it is not necessarily so: functional models may view language in general and (even minute) linguistic facts in particular, in a way that is alien to the formal ones, and there is no reason at all why they should have to yield to the 'dictates' of formal grammars. The Unaccusative Hypothesis (UH) may be one of these cases: it may just be irrelevant for functional grammars, as the same facts 'explained' by UH can also be understood in cognitive and functional terms. Although AM's stance is not quite as extreme as the one I have just outlined, such positions are unfortunately much too frequent in linguistics².

My main position in this paper can be summarised as follows: UH is not significantly useful for the functional and/or cognitive grammars (F/CGs) because it purports to explain in syntactic terms certain linguistic phenomena which F/CGs prefer to explain in a nonsyntactic way in accordance with their basic scientific aims.

2. ON SO-CALLED 'GRAMMATICAL FUNCTIONS'

2.1. Some preliminary issues

AM characterises her own approach as 'non-functional' and makes reference to «three different common uses of the term 'functional' in linguistic and language studies» (ibid.), centring her attention on the third one: «I shall argue against a functional classification of clause-types in English, i.e. a classification based on *grammatical functions* (GFs), such as S(ubject), O(bject), and so on» (p. 135). AM considers a formal approach more 'enlightening' than the functional one for the explanation of e.g. «the basic pattern underlying clause-types and V-types».

2.2. 'Linguistics', Generative Grammar, and (Cognitive)-Functional Grammar

First of all, there are a few general points of note where I have to disagree with AM. On page 141, she makes a statement that can only be accepted in very restrictive terms, i.e. as referring to Generative Grammars and not to 'linguistics' at large: «much of the recent effort in linguistics has been devoted to deriving lexical properties from syntactic properties». But for many people the opposite seems to be true, lexical properties being determinant for the understanding of syntactic properties: Argument structure, for instance, is seen as depending on the lexical properties of verbs in a clearly semantic, not syntactic, approach.

Secondly, I think AM's definition and treatment of function and, correspondingly, of *functional grammars* (FGs) shows the prejudices to be found in the consideration of non-generative models by generative grammarians. On the one hand, I do not think it fair to consider Halliday (1985) and Dik (1980) as «perhaps the most representative of different frameworks within functional grammar» (p. 147, note 2). Of course, neither Halliday's nor Dik's models were set once and for all as far back as 1985 and 1980 respectively. To restrict my observations to Dik's functional model, it would have been at least necessary to consider the present state of the theory as reflected in Dik (1989) and Siewierska (1991), to quote just two classical works. FGs certainly include other alternative models, and a reference to at least T. Givón's

'typological-functional' model and to Foley and Van Valin's 'Role-and-Reference Grammar' would have been necessary. These two models are somehow functional+cognitive, which probably is the direction 'non-formal' models of grammar are nowadays taking, leading perhaps towards a new understanding of 'functionalism'. My approach in this paper will be of this type, which is of course relatively unfair on AM's paper which only addresses 'functional' grammars proper. Much of what follows in fact will be more 'cognitive' than strictly 'functional'.

On the other hand, AM's identification of the three «different common uses of the term 'functional' in linguistic and language studies» is far too vague to reflect the real meaning of 'functional'. Jan Nuyts (1992) devotes sections 1.2. and 1.3. (56 pages!) of his book to the analysis of the meaning of 'function' and 'functional explanation' in linguistics; see also Dik (1986). In my opinion, AM's presentation of the issue is too unrealistic and provides a very inaccurate picture of present-day FGs. I agree that considerations of space, and the main purpose of her article, did not enable sufficient treatment of the matter; but the overall picture of FGs offered in her article seems, rather than a shortened and simplified exposition of the model which could be an alternative to her own approach, something like a tailor-made adversary which one's own ideas can confront with superiority.

3. THE FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF CLAUSES AND VS

As a consequence of her presentation of FGs, AM raises some objections to functional explanations which, in my opinion, are not valid. She objects to the functional definition of transitivity in the dichotomous terms of *transitive* vs. *intransitive* (p. 137), which leads to a purely taxonomic approach to transitivity in the terms of a multiple classification of clause-types based on the categories of Subject and Object, as in Greenbaum and Quirk's grammar (1992) (AM, p. 136/137).

AM relates the functional analysis of transitivity to the acceptance of such Grammatical Functions (GFs) as O(bject) and S(ubject), which is in fact her main objection against FGs: «terms like S and O have no clear pretheoretical reference» (p. 135). «From a theoretical point of view the terms S and O are ... *derived* terms which refer to the surface structure position of the arguments of a V» (p. 146).

AM's view is certainly right, as S and O have crosslinguistically been shown not to be universally necessary categories, and they sometimes obscure things in the grammatical analysis of linguistic facts in many languages³. In 'Role-and-Reference Grammar', too, S and O are abandoned as basic, universal, categories, see Van Valin (ed. 1993) and the original reasoning behind the abandonment of these categories in an early article as Foley and Van Valin

(1977). The debate still continues, even in the 'formal' models, whenever crosslinguistic studies are attempted (see e.g. Manning (1996, 1.2.3)).

But do the functional models posit S and O as universal categories? A brief look at Dik's FG may suffice. For him and his followers, S and O, called 'syntactic functions', «are regarded as neither primitive nor universal. Nor in the case of languages actually manifesting syntactic functions are subjects and objects considered to be necessarily present in all the structures of the language» (Siewierska 1991: 73). The operations of 'subject assignment' and 'object-assignment' (mainly perspectival in nature, see Siewierska (1991: 74/75)) are responsible for the presence or absence of S and O in a particular language. Dik also showed that some languages lack both S and O whereas others only have 'subject-assignment' ⁴.

FGs, therefore, do not posit S and O as primitives; in fact, things can be much more clearly understood if they are considered as secondary, i.e., as *derived*. But they are derived from the semantic and pragmatic (predicational) organisation of the utterance **plus** the speaker's perspective. According to Dik the predication specifies a certain «basic perspective on the SoA [State of Affairs] which it designates. The basic perspective runs from the first argument A1 to A2, and on to A3, if present» (Dik 1989: 212); Nuyts (1992: 213) goes even further and proposes «that the pragmatic functions have to operate not only before the syntactic function assignment, but even at the pre-predicational level», i.e., the predication should already have a certain perspective imposed on it which could be $A^2 \rightarrow A^1$, $A^3 \rightarrow A^1 \rightarrow A^2$, etc. Nuyts' idea amounts to saying that **before** any linguistic (pre-) organisation of the utterance, the SoA is already organised around a certain point of interest which need not coincide with anything like S or O (moreover, it makes no sense to use these terms at this level of analysis). We could say that in an SoA with several participants, a speaker may be interested in 'talking about' any of them, and that she will ultimately organise her utterance accordingly. This perspectivisation is carried out even before the arguments are assigned the semantic functions of 'agent', 'goal', 'beneficiary', etc. Let us consider the following sentences:

- (1) The child gave his mother a letter
- (2) The mother was given a letter by her child
- (3) A letter was given by the child to his mother
- (4) The child gave a letter to his mother

If we note 'the child' as A^1 , 'his mother' as A^3 , and 'a letter' as A^2 , the difference between these sentences is clearly a matter of perspective: $A^1-A^3-A^2$ (1); $A^3-A^2-A^1$ (2); $A^2-A^1-A^3$ (3); $A^1-A^2-A^3$ (4), and so on. Perspectivisation would thus operate on a prelinguistic level, so that the syntactic construction in (3) would be a *consequence* of (would be *derived* from) the adoption of the

order A³-A²-A¹, principally irrespective of the semantic functions to be assigned to each of them. A similar view is to be found in Fillmore's cognitive *Construction Grammar* (Fillmore and Kay 1993) and elsewhere.

The relation between 'perspectivisation' and 'topic' is obvious and poses some problems which are far from having been satisfactorily solved. Haberland and Nedergaard Thomsen (1994), for instance, point to the inadequacies of Dik's definition of Topic and Subject. See also Brdar's (1994) discussion of Dik's original interpretation of Object Assignment in Croatian. There is no need to enter here into the long debate 'Topic vs. Subject', which is sufficiently well known.

Thus, even within one of the 'representative frameworks within functional grammar', the discussion misses an important point: it is not possible to begin by criticizing an analysis that is far from universal in FGs. If we take cognitive-functional models into consideration, the same seems to be true. Let us briefly recall the characterisation of transitivity in terms of a gradience, which is typical of much cognitive-functional thinking on these issues.

In this view, a V is **not** transitive **or** intransitive, but a gradience can be defined from (proto)typical transitivity to (proto)typical intransitivity. Any particular verb will occupy a certain space within this cline. The basis is obviously the analysis of an utterance as a predicate plus a certain number of arguments; ultimately, as in Dik's FG or Langacker's (and others') CG, it is a consequence of the organisation and structure of (our perception of) events (states, processes etc). This enables us to say that it is *grammatical constructions* that are (more or less) (in)transitive, i.e., transitivity is not limited to the V, it is not just a matter of classification of Vs.⁵

Hopper and Thomson (1980) defined transitivity in prototypical terms, and 'prototypical transitivity' is characterised by the simultaneous presence of the following criteria: (a) Participants: two or more; (b) Kinesis: action/process; (3) Aspect: telic (bounded); (4) Punctuality: punctual; (5) Volitionality: volitional; (6) Affirmation: affirmative/positive polarity; (7) Mode: realis; (8) Agency: highly agentive; (9) Affectedness of object: totally affected object; (10) Individuation of object: highly individuated (for a critical summary of Hopper and Thompson's view, see Croft (1991a: 130ff; 1991b) and Moreno Cabrera (1991: 467ff)).

If all 10 features are present, we have prototypical transitivity, if none of them is present we have prototypical intransitivity; intermediate cases are accounted for in terms of higher or lower prototypicality. If there is only one participant but most of the other features are present, we shall have a special case of high although not full prototypicality; if features (3), (4), (7) are not present, transitivity will be lower, etc. Cook (1988) also characterises the *middle* constructions of Samoan in terms of Hopper and Thompson's features: these constructions occupy an intermediate position between transitivity-

ity and intransitivity. Goosens (1994) is an attempt to introduce the graduality of prototypical (in)transitivity in FG.

Functional and Cognitive grammars, therefore, do not necessarily posit S and O as basic, primitive categories. Nor is (in)transitivity understood in dichotomous terms.

4. THE UNACCUSATIVE HYPOTHESIS

4.1. The terms 'unaccusative' and '(un)ergative'

The terms *unaccusativity* (originally proposed by Perlmutter (1978))⁶ and *unergativity* are of common use in Generative Grammar and other formal models and are only seldom found in other approaches. Can this mean that the facts the unaccusativity hypothesis tries to explain remain unexplained in other approaches to syntactic structures, or that they are considered as lacking any interest? My point here, as was also partly AM's in her article, is whether (cognitive)-functional grammar can account for these facts, and whether they have accounted for them in a different way. That is: is it really necessary to introduce these terms and concepts into *functionally* oriented grammars?

It is necessary to consider first the definition of these terms and the facts they are supposed to explain. Firstly, some authors, for instance Demonte (1989), consider *ergative* and *unaccusative* as synonymous while others use them differently:

In this book the term unaccusative is used for passive verbs, raising verbs and verbs of movement and (change of) state, and we shall refer to one-argument verbs like *sink* as **ergatives**. The classification of verbs as unaccusative/ergative is a matter of ongoing research. Many authors do not make any distinction between the terms, or consider verbs with transitive pendants like *sink*, which we label ergatives, as unaccusatives. (Haegeman 1991: 311/312).

It has to be mentioned that many scholars do not see this extension of the meaning of **ergative** as justifiable. As Dixon (1994: 20) puts it:

In what Pullum (1988: 585) calls 'a truly crackbrained piece of terminological revisionism', there has arisen the habit – which appears to have begun with the MIT theses of Burzio (1981) and Pesetsky (1982) – of (...) using the term 'ergative' in connection with pairs of sentences such as *John opened the window* and *The window opened*, but now referring to S and O as 'the ergative set'. Not only is the label 'ergative' being used in an inappropriate context, it is being used for the wrong member of the opposition, in place of 'absolutive'.

Other examples of similar 'crackbrained terminological revisionism' could be mentioned, but suffice it to say that the overgeneralisation of an already well-established (and precisely defined) term can very frequently obscure important distinctions while very little, or nothing at all, is gained. As is sufficiently well known, the term 'ergative' has traditionally been used to refer to the case marking on the 'subject' (in more correct terms, the 'agent') of a transitive verb, although it can also be found outside morphology proper (see Manning (1996), Dixon (1994), and Moreno Cabrera (1991) for details). Now, if we say that

(7) the door opened

is a case of ergativity (i.e., of an ergative verb), what can it possibly mean? ⁷ Obviously, that what in a certain construction is the O of a transitive verb (see (12) below) in (7) has the function of a S. This is impossible for verbs like *kill* or *eat*:

(8) *the chicken ate

(9) *the man killed

Neither *the chicken* nor *the man* can be understood as objects of their verbs now functioning as subjects, i.e., they are not equivalent to (10) and (11) ⁸

(10) someone ate the chicken

(11) someone killed the man

whereas

(12) someone opened the door

is a valid equivalent of (7).

The fact is not trivial, but it was not previously unknown. In Latin grammars the term *deponentia* was used to refer to verbs with an active meaning and a passive form. The term was extended to the 'traditional' grammars of the Scandinavian languages (cfr. Spore 1965: 187, Lockwood 1977: 135/136) where certain verbs in *-s* (the usual mark of the middle voice) have an 'active' sense; our sentence (7) above would correspond to (13) in Icelandic:

(13) *dyrnar opnuðust*
[doors-the opened- themselves]
the door opened

with the verb in the middle voice, marked by *-st*; similarly in Spanish, with the *se*-form of the middle voice:

(14) *la puerta se abrió*
[the door itself opened]
the door opened

Ignacio Bosque (1989) also uses 'verbo deponente' instead of 'verbo inacusativo'. The *middle voice* is therefore a traditional and acceptable term for some verbs that some people nowadays call *unaccusative* or *ergative*. But *unaccusativity* is not limited to this usage, so that it would not be fair to dismiss the term and the corresponding concept as useless on this basis only.

As for the terms 'unaccusative' and 'unergative', which Palmer (1994: 76)

characterises as 'rather opaque', they also seem to be equivalent to a distinction commonly made in typological linguistics: that of **agentive** vs. **patientive** verbs, see Palmer (1994: 65ff).

Siewierska (1991: 168) sees Perlmutter's 'unaccusativity hypothesis' as a basically terminological issue:

In many languages the basic structural characteristic of presentative constructions is the postverbal placement of the introduced discourse referent, the subject status of which is a matter of continuing dispute. The postposing of the subject after the verb, referred to as 'presentative inversion', is common cross-linguistically with a class of intransitive verbs describing existence and appearance in the world of discourse, movement to a new location and change into a new state, which have come to be known as unaccusative predicates.

The unaccusative hypothesis does not seem to have had much impact outside certain formal models of language, mainly Relational Grammar and Generative Grammar. In the functional and (functional-)cognitive models little, if any, discussion of unaccusativity is to be found, mainly because the facts it is supposed to explain can be equally well (or better) explained with the tools of those non-formal frameworks.

That is, the unaccusative hypothesis seems to be a basically formal issue which may be useful whenever the formal, structural properties of sentences occupy the centre of interest; but if we are interested in the possible functions of sentences and in explaining their structures in functional terms (see Dik (1986)), the unaccusativity hypothesis does not seem to offer any really new insights (see below, 4.4.2.)

In short, functional thinking on grammar **does** identify subclasses of intransitive verbs. On the one hand, due to the gradual character of the distinction transitive/intransitive; secondly, as a consequence of the identification of semantically based functions which can (but do not necessarily have to) be superficially reflected in categories or GFs as S and O: surface syntactical organisation need not correspond to the semantic marking of the arguments⁹. Thirdly, some of the phenomena referred to with these terms have been the object of linguistic research for a long time.

One important point, however, is that these possible V-classes are defined in semantic, not syntactic terms. Classifying verbs in terms of their syntactic properties, on the other hand, does not seem to add much to our knowledge: saying that a construction is due to the presence of a type of verb which in its turn is defined as 'the class of verbs prompting a certain construction' seems a rather anomalous piece of circular reasoning. Recent semantics based analysis of types of verbs which are significant for the issue of transitivity vs. intransitivity within a broad cognitive/functional framework can be found in Schlesinger (1995) and Lehmann (1991); in

neither of them do syntactic considerations determine the classification but are derived from it.

4.2. Why an Unaccusative Hypothesis?

The unaccusative hypothesis, however, as it is presented in the Government and Binding model (1) is a **syntactic** phenomenon; and (2) it explains several other significant syntactic phenomena.

That unaccusativity and unergativity are basically syntactic is the main stance of AM and, of course, of Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 2-3):

The Unaccusativity Hypothesis (...) is a syntactic hypothesis that claims that there are two classes of intransitive verbs, the *unaccusative* verbs and the *unergative* verbs, each associated with a different underlying syntactic configuration.

They define **unergative** verbs as those taking 'a D-structure subject and no object', while an **unaccusative** verb «takes a D-structure object ... and no subject» (Levin and Rappaport 1995: 3). The syntactic point of this approach is clearly stated in AM (p. 140):

(...) mapping principles ... and the adoption of the terms internal vs. external argument¹⁰ render unnecessary the use of GFs, which are reserved for the actual surface position of the sole argument of unaccusative/unergative Vs. This is why this argument behaves as a S according to all morpho-syntactic criteria.

That is, we can have two different configurations, as exemplified by the verbs *arrive* (unaccusative) and *cry* (unergative):

[ARRIVE _y]	[-] _[vp] V NP]
[xCRY]	[NP] _[vp] V]]

It would be misleading to say that unaccusative verbs have no subject whereas unergative verbs have no object, although this is certainly true in Perlmutter's (1978) original formulation (remember that S and O are primitives in Relational Grammar)¹¹.

Unaccusative verbs can be identified through some **diagnostic tests**; AM considers two of them: 'Verbs of appearance and existence: *there* insertion and locative inversion', and 'Verbs indicating change of state: resultative phrases and the causative alternation'. Termed 'the locative inversion' and 'the resultative construction', they also form the bulk of Levin and Rappaport's book, although some other syntactic points (e.g. 'The linking of argu-

ments') as well as a full theoretical discussion are also included. Let us restrict our attention to the points touched upon by AM, which form the core of her argument. I shall not offer a full analysis, of course, but shall limit myself to establishing a general background on which an alternative explanation of the facts can be built.

4.3. 'There' insertion and locative inversion as presentative constructions

How can we explain such facts as the possibility of *there*-insertion in sentences like (15) and (16) versus the ungrammaticality of (17) (adapted from AM p. 141-142)?

- (15) D-S: _ [_{VP} arrived a man]
 S-S: There [_{VP} arrived a man]
 (16) In the streets of Chicago lives an old man
 (17) *There cried Fergus (after his defeat)

Unaccusative Vs (such as *arrive*, *live*) allow *there*-insertion, whereas unergative Vs (*cry*) do not.

But Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 223ss.) themselves point to the existence of some unergative Vs in English which do allow locative inversion:

- (18) On the third floor WORKED two young women called Maryanne Thomson and Ava Brent, who ran the audio library and print room. [L. Colwin, *Goodbye without Leaving*, 54] [Levin and Rappaport Hovav example (19b), Chapter 6]

Both *there*-insertion and locative inversion seem to be **presentative** constructions, where the locative element (precise, in locative inversion; general, in *there*-insertion) appears as the theme or the discourse topic, forming the background where a participant is introduced. This construction should allow, as it in fact does, verbs of different types, restrictions being of a pragmatic-discoursal, not syntactic character. According to Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995: 20):

there is in fact little evidence that locative inversion actually diagnoses unaccusativity in English, and that there are problems with considering this construction to be an unaccusative diagnostic. Instead, we attribute the restrictions on the verbs found in this construction, which are reminiscent of, but not exactly like, those associated with unaccusative diagnostics, **to the discourse function of the construction. Essentially, the discourse function requires a verb with a single argument in postverbal position.** [Emphasis added, EB].

Levin and Rappaport Hovav's final statement in their long chapter on these constructions is sufficiently clear: locative inversion has to «receive its explanation from discourse considerations» (p. 277). But we have already encountered a similar idea in FG: remember Siewierska's quote above, and similar observations can easily be multiplied.

Dik (1989: 179), following Hannay's proposals, introduces a pragmatic function, PRESENTATIVE, or NEW TOPIC: «A term with presentative function refers to an entity which the speaker by means of the associated predication wishes to explicitly introduce into the world of discourse»; this pragmatic function is responsible for *there*-insertion in sentences like (19), which would not normally allow it:

(19) There is the dog in the garden.

More significantly, he points to the fact that «'Presentative' constructions in many languages are characterised by 'expletive' or 'dummy' pronouns or adverbials taking the position which would otherwise be occupied by the Subject» (p. 270); moreover, «Even where the NewTop at first sight seems to have Subj function, it often lacks certain properties criterial for Subjects in the language concerned.»

A similar point of view is found in Downing and Locke (1992: 259f):

In formal and literary English, verbs of appearing and emerging lend themselves naturally to the presentation of New information. However, existence or appearance should not be taken in a literal sense, but rather in relation to the discourse: it is appearance on the scene of discourse that counts. Because of this, many intransitive verbs of movement such as *run* can be used with presentative *there* as in the example *There ran across the lawn a large black dog*. Even a verb like *disappear* may, in an appropriate context, function as a presentative.

It is clear, then, that FG and GB (i.e., Levin and Rappaport Hovav) agree on the issue of *there*-insertion and locative inversion. Dik's FG, of course, does not discuss anything like locative **inversion**, as all structures are directly generated and no transformations (including change of order) are allowed. A thematic element will therefore occupy the first position in a sentence. In Downing and Locke's model, inversion is seen in terms of 'marked theme' (§ 28.4).

As for this diagnostic feature, therefore, it seems unnecessary to introduce the unaccusative in FGs, as a satisfactory explanation of the facts has already been there for a long time (albeit in a terminologically less 'opaque' way).

4.4. The resultative construction

This construction has been the object of much discussion in recent times and the observations contained in this section have to be limited to some basic

points. AM's analysis is summarised in 4.4.1.; in 4.4.2. an alternative, cognitive-functional interpretation is then offered.

4.4.1. AM's analysis

In AM's words (p. 143):

[The] analysis of resultative phrases offers compelling evidence for a syntactic account of unaccusativity in English. Syntactically, a resultative phrase is a XP (normally AP or PP) which is predicated of a NP object; semantically, it denotes the state achieved by that NP as a result of the action denoted by the V. (...) The generalization is that Vs lacking Os cannot occur with resultative phrases (**Mary laughed sick*).

The ungrammaticality of such constructions «is a further indication that the position of the O is 'filled' at some level of representation and hence no elements can occupy that position in the surface» (p. 144).

The construction is grammatical, however, if *fake reflexives* are introduced, as in (20) (= AM's (24a)):

(20) Mary laughed herself sick

but not in cases like (21) (= AM's (26a)):

(21) *The lake froze *itself* solid.

On the other hand, (22a,b) (= AM's 25a,b) are perfectly grammatical:

- (22) a. The door swung open
b. The lake froze solid

Finally, semantic considerations 'also play a part', as «not all unaccusatives allow resultative phrases»: stative verbs and «Vs of inherently directed motion (e.g. arrive)» do not (p. 144).

Levin and Rappaport propound a similar explanation. They add that «a resultative phrase may be predicated of the immediately postverbal NP, but may not be predicated of a subject or of an oblique complement. We call this generalization the *Direct Object Restriction*.» (1995: 34).

4.4.2. The formal vs. the functional/cognitive view

Certain assumptions are necessary for the Unaccusative Hypothesis. The main one is the existence of an autonomous level of syntax, i.e. of formal rela-

tions between the elements of a clause which do not depend on any non-syntactic features. Unaccusative verbs therefore are characterised as those verbs which select an O (or an internal argument) but have no S (or external argument), i.e., they form a syntactic class of verbs irrespective of their semantics (not quite so, however, as 'semantics also plays a role').

This type of explanation cannot be expected to make much sense in functional or cognitive models of grammar, as no such thing as an 'autonomous semantic level' is taken to exist and, correspondingly, purely syntactic explanations are to be avoided. As we saw above (Section 3), the selection of S and O are secondary and the argument structure of the clause has a semantic basis: it is the 'semantic functions' of Agent, Goal, etc. which are selected by the predicate, and S and O assignment is then explained as the result of various, basically semantic and pragmatic, factors. Similarly in cognitive grammar, syntax is derived from cognitive (and basically semantic) representations; it is these nonsyntactic representations that are expected to explain the syntactic behaviour. The references would be too many to offer even a short sample here (but at least see Langacker 1987 and Goldberg 1995). Even in some formal models with certain functional and/or cognitive features, as in Lexical Functional Grammar, proposals have been made of a special, semantic, level of 'argument structure' which co-determines syntactic structure (see Wechsler 1995).

The Unaccusative Hypothesis as presented in AM cannot therefore be expected to fit in the functional models, and its acceptance in accordance with AM's proposal would amount to self-denial of their main theoretical postulates.

4.4.3. *Functional and cognitive alternatives to UH*

The resultative construction is not absent from other languages. Samoan is a case in point, as it has morphological marking of causatives showing that resultatives are ultimately a special case of causativity (to (20): *Mary laughed and she became sick* = her laughing made her sick). An example is the following:

(23) *...e nao moega o Sala ma lana fanau na taai faalelei*
 PARTICLE only bed POSS S. and POSS children PAST roll up CAUS-good
 ...Only the sleeping mats of Sala and her children were rolled up properly
 (adapted from Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 401).

Here, *faalelei* is a good equivalent of the adverbs in the English sentences above (in fact, the causative prefix *faa* is also used to form adverbs: *faasamoa*

'à la Samoan, in the Samoan way'), so that (23) could be roughly equivalent to 'they rolled the mats up good', meaning that at the end of the process the mats were in a good condition: 'they rolled up the mats CAUSING (THEM TO BE) GOOD'. In this Samoan example, the semantic aspect of the construction is clear: something is done and *as a result* a new situation comes into being; the syntactic structure of the sentence transparently reflects its semantics.

A 'second argument' is obviously necessary, as *the mats* in the Samoan example; it is the argument which suffers the change of state. If the verb is intransitive (e.g. *laugh*) there is no second participant (and that is one reason for calling it intransitive), hence the ungrammaticality of **Mary laughed sick* with the intended reading.

But, as we saw above, (in)transitivity is a matter of degree and the term has to be applied to a full construction rather than to individual verbs. It is also possible to analyse sentences like (20)-(22) in terms of the 'agentivity' of their subjects and the transitivity of the clause as a whole.

These constructions always centre on the final state of a process, i.e. on the *result*, not on the process itself. As they refer to states, their transitivity is low, as is the agentivity of their subjects: they can be understood as 'causers' of the resulting state, as in (20); or as 'undergoers' of a change, i.e. as having gone over from one state to a new one (the result), as in (22)¹². In neither case, however, is the 'subject' the 'controller' of the change, and it thus lacks a key feature of agentivity.

Human beings, however, principally have an inherently higher degree of agentivity than non-human ones, a feature that explains why 'fake reflexives' are basically only possible with this type of 'subject': a sentence like (20) can heighten the agentivity of 'Mary', seeing her as partly responsible for the final result, which is in principle not possible for a non-animated subject like 'the lake' in (21). In (20), Mary is thus seen as 'causing herself' be in the resulting state of 'being sick'; that is, the construction is interpreted as if it in fact included a second argument, co-referent with the first, as seen in (24):

(24) Mary_i laughs Mary_i sick,
similar to unproblematic (25), with a higher level of transitivity:

(25) Mary tickled John sick.

The *lake*, however, cannot 'cause itself' to be in the state of 'being frozen', (26) is semantically anomalous¹³:

(26) *The lake_i froze the lake_i solid,
in the same way that (27) is at least an oddity:

(27) *The lake froze the water solid.

But things are not as straightforward as they may seem. (21), (26) and (27)

can be acceptable if we endow the lake with volition ¹⁴ or, in more traditional terms, if it is 'humanised'. Volition is one of the key features of prototypical agentivity. But in this view the ungrammaticality of these sentences would be due to the semantic characteristics of the agent (and the verb), not to any syntactic constraints.

A similar approach can be found in Adele Goldberg's (1995) long consideration of the resultative construction within the framework of *Construction Grammar*. It can be briefly summarised in the following way:

A resultative construction is posited which exists independently of particular verbs that instantiate it. In order to account for fake object cases, we need to recognize that the construction itself can add a patient argument, besides adding the result argument in nonstative verbs which only have an 'instigator' as profiled argument. Constructions (...) have semantics and are capable of bearing arguments. Thus the postverbal NP of the fake object cases is an argument *of the construction* **although not necessarily of the main verb**. Under this analysis, the verb retains its intrinsic semantic representation, while being integrated with the meaning directly associated with the construction. (P. 189) [My emphasis in boldface. EB]

The following is a simplified representation of this construction ¹⁵:

Sem	CAUSE-BECOME R	< agt	pat	result-goal	
R: instance, means	PRED ↓	<	↓	↓	>
Syn	V	SUBJ	OBJ	OBL _{ap/pp}	!

In addition to this, four constraints are required:

1. The two-argument resultative construction must have an (animate) instigator argument.
2. The action denoted by the verb must be interpreted as directly causing the change of state: no intermediary time intervals are possible.
3. The resultative adjective must denote the endpoint of a scale.
4. Resultative phrases cannot be headed by deverbal adjectives. (p. 193).

These constraints are responsible for the grammaticality of (24-27a) and for the corresponding ungrammaticality of (24-27b) (examples taken from Goldberg 1995: 193ff):

- (24)a. She slept herself sober
 b. *The feather tickled her silly
- (25)a. Harry shot Sam dead
 b. Harry shot Sam *for an hour
- (26)a. He ate himself sick
 b. *He drank himself funny
- (27)a. She painted the house red
 b. *She painted the house reddened

The basic argument is therefore as follows: there exists a special construction with the meaning that an animate being (*agt*) causes a change of state (result-goal) of a certain type in a second being (*pat*) under certain conditions. If the verb inserted in the construction inherently has only one argument (as *laugh*), the agent can serve both roles (*agt* and *pat*) if the other conditions are fulfilled. But, according to the principles responsible for the linking of lexical verbs and grammatical constructions (see Goldberg 1995, Fillmore and Kay 1993), the verb itself has to comply with certain *semantic* conditions, too. Therefore, the facts adduced as a diagnostic for unaccusative are shown to be a special case of a particular construction (i.e. a semantic-syntax configuration), not of particular verbs, which adequately explains the relation between such pairs as (20) and (25) as well as the ungrammaticality of, e.g., (21) and (27).

5. CONCLUSION

After considering AM's arguments, I do not deem it necessary to introduce unaccusativity in functional and/or cognitive grammar: after a brief analysis of the two diagnostic tests for unaccusativity discussed in AM, nothing new seems to have been gained that could not be achieved by other, functional and cognitive-functional means; moreover, the basic assumptions that need to be made in order to propose the existence of a special class of unaccusative verbs are contrary to the theoretical stance represented by functional and cognitive grammars.

NOTES

¹ This paper has been made possible by DGICYT research contract PS94-0014 and a Del Amo Scholarship for a stay at the University of California, Berkeley (1996-97). Both are gratefully acknowledged. I also wish to thank the referees and Prof. A. Downing, who gave some very interesting comments which, so I hope, allowed me to avoid some significant mistakes in the original version.

² Although it has to be said that many a 'formal' model has gradually adopted concepts and

principles which originally were initiated in 'functional' grammars. Without ever mentioning the source, of course.

³ To quote just three examples: for Samoan and Malay/Indonesian, the term (and concept) Subject is avoided in Mosel & Hovdhaugen 1992 and Mintz 1994. In their proposal of a linguistic terminology for the grammar of Tokelau, Hovdhaugen *et al.* (1989) do not even include the term «Subject». These grammars are cognitive-functionally, not formally oriented.

⁴ In typological terms, this would be an implicational universal: if a language has O, it will necessarily have S; but languages can also have only S or neither S nor O as syntactic functions.

⁵ This is obvious in *Construction Grammar* (Fillmore & Kay 1993; Goldberg 1995).

⁶ It is interesting to note that Perlmutter's Relational Grammar **does** consider S and O as primary, universal categories whereas in Generative Grammar they are derived, not primary, categories. The rather intricate story of the unaccusative hypothesis and its adoption by Generative Grammar is told in Pullum (1988), who seems to be the first proponent of the term *unaccusative*. Interestingly enough, in his book of 1991 the article is included in Part III, *Unscientific Behavior*, as it seems, Perlmutter's original analysis of Italian, presented in his 1978 Harvard lectures and in a paper published in the *Proceedings of the 4th Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistic Society* of the same year, was used by Burzio (1981) and by Chomsky himself (1981) without any acknowledgment, a situation which continued until much later (for instance, Burzio 1986). According to Pullum (p. 147) the first published article on unaccusativity in a scientific journal of wide circulation now seems to be Alice Harris' (1982).

⁷ It was probably M.A.K. Halliday who first used the term 'ergative' in this context.

⁸ (8) and (9) are perfectly grammatical in other readings, e.g. as the equivalent of *the chicken ate something*, as some of my referees pointed out. On this issue, see also Goossens (1994) and Schlesinger (1995).

⁹ As one of my referees rightly points out, the ideas presented in this paragraph are perhaps 'cognitive' rather than strictly 'functional'. The relation between both types of model is being increasingly recognised, however (see e.g. Goossens (1994), and some of the models mentioned in this paper could be rightly termed 'functional-cognitive'. In a short paper (Bernárdez, (1996)), I discussed some similarities between Dik's FG and Fillmore's Construction Grammar.

¹⁰ Let us remember the definition of *internal vs. external argument* in Demonte (1989: 63 s.): «A los argumentos directamente vinculados a un núcleo selector, a los que, de hecho, se generan con éste dentro de su misma proyección los denominaremos *argumentos internos* de ese núcleo. (...) (Al argumento que) «se realiza sintácticamente fuera de la proyección máxima en la que se encuentra su selector (...) lo denominaremos ... *argumento externo*».

¹¹ Pullum (1988/1991: 148) offers the following definition in the relational framework: «In some intransitive clauses (typically with nonvolitional predicates) but not others (typically volitional), the *superficial subject* corresponds to a direct object of the clause in a more abstract subjectless structure».

¹² In Schlesinger's (1995: Chapter 6) approach to the linking of semantic roles and grammatical functions, a term can appear as a subject of action-clauses when it has at least one agentivity feature, e.g. CHANGE (it participates in some change of state); in event-clauses it is usually nonagentive but has the feature ATTRIBUTE, i.e., some attribute is assigned to it by the predicate. His approach is cognitive rather than functional, but Goossens' (1994) similar one fits in Dik's FG. See also Mithun (1991) for some case studies of 'subject assignment' to terms with different degrees of prototypical agentivity.

¹³ In more precise terms: our conceptualisation of lakes does not include their being able to act volitionally and as controllers of the states they may be the cause of.

¹⁴ In Pullum's definition of unaccusative verbs (see above, footnote 11), specific reference was made to volition.

¹⁵ A *construction* is a form-meaning pair where some aspect of form or meaning is not strictly predictable from the component parts of the construction (cfr. Goldberg 1995: 4). They are comparable, although not identical, to Dik's *predications*, corresponding to States-of-Affairs (SoAs). The main difference lies in the importance of the Verb (more exactly, the predicate) in

Dik's FG, but both Dik's predications and Fillmore's constructions have as their ultimate bases some 'cognitive constructs', i.e., conceptualisations of SoAs of reality. On these similarities, see Bernárdez (1996). In the figure, Sem = the semantic component of the construction, Syn is its syntactic aspect. The 'meaning' CAUSE-BECOME is realised by a PRED(icate) which syntactically corresponds to a V(erb). The semantic roles of *agt* (agent), *pat* (patient) and result-goal are syntactically realised as SUBJ(ect), OBJ(ect) and OBL(ique).

Departamento de Filología Inglesa
Facultad de Filología
Universidad Complutense
Ciudad Universitaria
28040 Madrid

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bernárdez, E. (1996). Predicaciones y Construcciones. *Alfinge* 9:79-86.
- Bosque, I. (1989). *Las categorías gramaticales*. Madrid: Síntesis.
- Brdar, M. (1994). Object assignment in a Functional Grammar of Croatian revisited. In Engeberg-Pedersen et al. (eds.): 109-128.
- Burzio, L. (1981). *Intransitive Verbs and Italian Auxiliaries*. PhD Dissertation, M.I.T.
- Burzio, L. (1986). *Italian Syntax: A Government-Binding Approach*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Cook, K. W. (1988). *A Cognitive Analysis of Grammatical Relations, Case, and Transitivity in Samoan*. PhD Tesis, University of California, San Diego.
- Croft, W. (1991a). *Typology and Universals*. Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Croft, W. (1991b). *Syntactic Categories and Grammatical Relations*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, N. (1986). *Knowledge of Language*. New York: Praeger.
- Demonte, V. (1989). *De las estructuras a la rección*. Madrid: Síntesis.
- Dik, S. (1980). *Studies in Functional Grammar*. London: Academic Press.
- Dik, S. (1989). *The Theory of Functional Grammar. Part I*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dik, S. (1986). On the notion 'functional explanation'. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 1: 11-52.
- Dixon, R.M.W. (1994). *Ergativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.
- Downing, A. and P. Locke (1992). *A University Course in English Grammar*. London, Prentice Hall.
- Engeberg-Pedersen, E.; L.F. Jakobsen and L. Schack Rasmussen (eds. 1994). *Function and Expression in Functional Grammar*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Fauconnier, G. (1984). *Espaces Mentaux*. Paris: Minuit. English translation *Mental Spaces*, published by The MIT Press, 1985, and Cambridge U.P. 1994.
- Fillmore, Ch. J. and P. Kay. (1993). *Construction Grammar Coursebook*. University of California, Berkeley.
- Foley, W.A. and R.D. Van Valin. (1977). On the viability of 'Subject' in Universal Grammar. *BLS* 3: 293-320.

- Goldberg, A.E. (1995). *Constructions. A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Goossens, L. (1994). Transitivity and the treatment of non prototypicality in Functional Grammar. In Engeberg-Pedersen et al. (eds.): 65-80.
- Greenbaum, S. and R. Quirk (1992). *A Student's Grammar of English*. London: Longman.
- Haberland, H. and O. Nedergaard Thomsen (1994). Syntactic functions, topic, and grammatical relations. In Engeberg-Pedersen et al. (eds.): 153-182.
- Haegeman, L. (1991). *Introduction to Government and Binding Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Harris, A. (1982). Georgian and the Unaccusative Hypothesis. *Language* 58: 290-306.
- Hopper, P.J., and S.A. Thomson (1980). «Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse.» *Language* 56: 251-299.
- Hovdhaugen, E., I. Höem, C. M. Iosefo and A. M. Vonen. (1989). *A Handbook of the Tokelau Language*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.
- Langacker, R. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*. Vol. I. Stanford (Cal): Stanford U.P.
- Leech, G. (1988). Varieties of English Grammar. In W.-D. Bald (ed.) *Kernprobleme der Englischen Grammatik*: 5-17. München: Langenscheidt/Longman.
- Lehmann, C. (1991). Predicate classes and PARTICIPATION. In: Seiler and Premper (eds.), *Partizipation. Das sprachliche Erfassen von Sachverhalten*, 183-239. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- Levin, B. and M. Rappaport Hovav (1995). *Unaccusativity*. Cambridge (Mass): The MIT Press.
- Lockwood, W.B. (1977). *An Introduction to Modern Faroese*. Tórshavn: Farøya Skúla-bókagrunnur.
- Manning, C.D. (1996). *Ergativity*. Stanford (Ca): CSLI Publications.
- Mendikoetxea, A. (1995). Clause-Types and Verb-Types: Implications for descriptive and pedagogical grammars of English. *EIUC* 3: 133-150.
- Mintz, M.W. (1994). *A Student's Grammar of Malay and Indonesian*. Singapore: EPB Publishers.
- Mithun, M. (1991). Active/Agentive Case Marking and its Motivation. *Language* 67: 510-546.
- Moreno Cabrera, J.C. (1991). *Curso Universitario de Lingüística General. Vol. I*. Madrid: Síntesis.
- Mosel, U. and E. Hovdhaugen (1992). *Samoan Reference Grammar*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Nuyts, J. (1992). *Aspects of a Cognitive-Pragmatic Theory of Language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Palmer, F.R. (1994). *Grammatical Roles and Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.
- Perlmutter, D.M. (1978). Impersonal Passives and the Unaccusative Hypothesis. *BLS* 4: 157/189.
- Pesetsky, D. (1982). *Paths and Categories*. PhD Dissertation, M.I.T.
- Pullum, G.K. (1988). Topic - Comment: Citation Etiquette beyond Thunderdome. In Pullum G. K. (1991), *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax*. 147-158 (Chicago:

- The University of Chicago Press). (Originally published in *NLLT* 6, 1988: 579-588).
- Schlesinger, I. M. (1995). *Cognitive space and linguistic case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siewierska, A. (1991). *Functional Grammar*. London: Routledge.
- Spore, P. (1965). *La Langue Danoise*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.
- Van Oosten, J. (1986). *The Nature of Subjects, Topics and Agents: A Cognitive Explanation*. Indiana University Linguistics Club. Bloomington, Indiana.
- Van Valin, R. D. (ed. 1993). *Advances in Role and Reference Grammar*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Wechsler, S. (1995). *The Semantic Basis of Argument Structure*. Stanford CA: CSLI Publications.