

## Chapter 6

### Communicative Goals and Means: Their Cognitive Interaction

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#### 1 INTRODUCTION

The present study considers communication from the perspective of the psychological situation at each moment within the producer of a communication.<sup>1</sup> The production of a particular communication at any given moment is seen as the “vector resultant” of a set of simultaneous conditions within the producer: her communicative goals in correlation with the availability of suitable expressive means.

The communication-producing system of the brain does not seem to require precision consistency to function, for goals are often in conflict and every means has gaps and limitations. Rather, the system has structural properties that enable it to handle such internal “contradictions”: priorities are set and balances struck among conflicting goals, while all the means are drawn on in various proportions as needed to piece together an adequate realization of the moment’s goals. With respect to this last point, in fact, the distinctions between the various expressive means lose much of their usually assumed significance from the present psychological/functionalist perspective.

The perspective just outlined is taken to be relevant to all modes of communicating—including speaking, signing, gesturing, and writing—and so the analysis below is carried out in concepts and terms neutral to such distinctions of mode. Thus, instead of terms like “speaker,” “utterance,” “listener,” and “language,” this study uses “communicator,” “a communication,” “addressee” or “intended recipient,” and “communication system.” In the case of speech, “addressee” has the further advantage over “listener” of adopting the internal perspective of the communicator and implying nothing about that of the collocutor (such as where the collocutor’s attention may be at a given moment).

As already noted there, the preceding chapter, II-5, forms a pair with the present one. The present chapter concerns the online cognitive processing that takes place in the producer of a discourse to resolve the conflicts among competing communicative goals and available expressive means for the representation of a concept. The preceding chapter concerned the online cognitive processing that takes place in the recipient of such a discourse to resolve the conflicts among competing representations of a concept. As with some efforts elsewhere, the aim of the two chapters together is to ground linguistic material in the ongoing cognitive processing that underlies both its production and its comprehension, as a complement to the usual treatment of such material as a decoupled pattern of elements and structures.

## 1.1 The Nature of Communication

Anything that may at first be seen as an isolable portion of human mental activity, to which a term like “communication” is then applied, ultimately cannot be treated as a watertight compartment, for it inevitably consists of psychological processes that do not relate exclusively to each other but are embedded amidst a continuum of psychological functioning. Accordingly, the issue of communication is addressed here at three levels of inclusivity: a narrowly conceived core, the larger context in which this is situated, and the still more general modificational processes of subportioning, transforming, subsuming, nullifying, embedding, and the like, to which these are subject.

**1.1.1 The Communicative Core** There is perhaps a certain psychological process operating as a core to what is generally understood by “communication,” one experienced as a need or desire, present in the individual from an early age. This is the urge that certain phenomenological content within oneself—whatever is experienced, whether by apprehending, conceiving, feeling, or the like—become replicated within a certain other or others. Bringing about such a replication entails, for a given content, its encoding, transmission, receipt, and comprehension. These issues are exemplified in section 6 mainly under the discussion of goals (a) through (k).

**1.1.2 The Larger Context** The preceding core of communication does not often go on in a self-contained closed circuit but is usually conditioned by one’s awareness of further circumstances about oneself and the addressee as well as of the remaining total situation. Moreover, one’s

intentions for one's communication are often not limited solely to its successful comprehension but extend to its having further interpersonal effects or an avoidance of certain effects. That is, the basic core of communicative functioning is both responsive to and creative of—or in short, is integrated within—the larger context. These matters are further treated in section 6 mainly under the discussion of goals (l) through (p) as well as in chapter II-8—for example, in sections 3.1.3 and 4.4.3.

**1.1.3 Modificational Processes** The components of the putative “core” of the communicative process can be seen not to enjoy an inviolate collective unity together, for everyday human behavior can be observed that omits some while keeping the rest, transforms some, subsumes them all in a larger system, or even nullifies or appropriates certain of them in the service of some other function. These can be called **modificational processes**. We briefly discuss each of the processes just mentioned.

*Omission of a Component.* One standard component of the core of communication is intention: One intends to be communicating certain contents. But generally accompanying such intended contents is the information that one conveys about oneself and one's thoughts and feelings through largely unconscious bodily and vocal behavior, as well as through unintended aspects of the message itself. In this form of communication, all the components of the core system minus that of intention are in operation.

*Transformation of a Component.* One component of core communication may be the proviso that the communicator must actually experience the contents expressed by the communiqué. But such a proviso would then often undergo a transformation—for example, when an adult addresses a child. For the adult may attempt, on the basis of biographical equivalences, to communicate the emotional essence of an experience of his to the child, but to do so he will translate its constituent specifics into ones within the child's ken.

*Subsumption in a Larger System.* Conceivable as a broader (and perhaps more basic) form of human activity, in which strict communication would be subsumed only as a component, is general interpersonal attunement, responsiveness, and communion. This is evident, say, in two people sharing the activity of walking through a park, an activity within which the occasional exchange of utterances forms only one component.

*Nullification/Appropriation of a Component by Another Function.* Basic communicative functions can be co-opted in the service of another goal,

with its constituent components seemingly left intact but in fact partly nullified. For example, in the service of wanting an addressee to form a certain impression of one's self and thought, one may try to project a tailored image, to make this appear like a communication of what is actually in oneself, even when it is not.

The general case of this seems to be that virtually any psychological faculty can, in the service of its own functioning, more or less harmoniously appropriate other psychological faculties with originally different functions. It appears that this process can repeat in a virtually unlimited reflexive capacity of the mind, giving rise to intricate embeddings of intentions and of original-into-transferred functions. To illustrate, in their basic function, "repairs" are a variety of linguistic devices that a speaker uses to remedy hitches in her expression. But in (1)—excerpted from an example in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974—these devices appear to be appropriated and employed in profusion by the speaker as a means of showing embarrassed concern for the addressee's feelings. And built in turn on that function is the further function of the speaker's signaling to the addressee that she has his feelings in mind.

(1) ((pause)) I don' know of anybody—that—'cause anybody that I really didn't *di:g* I wouldn't have the *time*, uh: a:n: to waste I would say, unh if I didn' ( )

By contrast, a speaker who wished to hurt the addressee's feelings might make use of a sure, unbroken delivery style, something like that in "I wouldn't want to waste any time on anybody I didn't really dig."

## 1.2 Associated Factors

The cognitive system of communication necessarily involves other factors, including evolution, impairment, cultural differences, development, individual differences, and language typology and diachrony. Of these, the last three are now briefly considered.

**1.2.1 Child Development** Much more observation is needed, but it seems probable that the course of children's communicative development roughly follows something like the preceding outline of increasing inclusivity and complexity. There are no doubt some generalities and some individualities as to the sequence in which the various goals, means, contextual sensitivities, and manipulations come into operation and are integrated in a child, but they clearly do not all enter at once, and even those

that are singly functional at a particular stage cannot all be juggled together simultaneously by the child.

One example of a child manifesting a hierarchically not-high-enough level of communicative awareness involves a mother talking with her 4;3-year-old daughter (taken from *Tea Party*; Ervin-Tripp 1975).

(2) Mother: Do you think that was a good idea? [spilling out the milk]

Daughter: Yeah.

Here, the daughter apparently catches only the mild tone imparted by the question form and explicit content of the mother's utterance, but not the mother's use of that form and content as a higher-level device for couching a lesson-administering disapproval.

Another example is of the child who starts telling a stranger about recent events but has not taken into account the stranger's unfamiliarity with the characters, setting, and background of the story. Here, the child can control the content of the story but not the larger discourse context.

**1.2.2 Individual Differences** The whole pattern of balances in the communication system outlined above shifts in accordance with differences in the goals, means, and capabilities that occur in different individuals.

Thus, people differ as to the strengths and priorities of their goals. For example, a person with a strong need to express what is at this moment on his mind (goal (a) below) and with this in priority over his desire to attend to others' communicative needs (goal (m)) may be seen as conversationally pushy by a person with a different balance.

Further, one person differs from another not only in the strengths and priorities she accords to various goals, but also in the facility she has in realizing those different goals. Such facility could pertain, for example, to the extent to which she can hold in mind the whole content of a discourse, take an interlocutor's feelings into account, or press her communicative wishes (relevant, respectively, to goals (l), (m), (o) below). For example, in the goal of conveying an extensive idea, a person who counts among her reliable facilities an ability not to lose track of earlier points and to hear another's words during her own will be more willing to accept a give-and-take interchange as a context in which to fulfill her goal than a person without these facilities, who might instead require an assured period without interruption.<sup>2</sup>

Comparably, one individual can differ from another in her facility with the various expressive means. For instance, in the goal of expressing her

ideas in speech, one kind of person might not have quick access to the most apt vocabulary items (means (c) below) but might have a ready facility for forming complex constructions out of common words (means (f)). Such a person will usually compensate for the former with the latter, contributing a major component to her characteristic speaking style. This style might be regarded as wordy, without any compelling *bon mots*, but still able to convey the ideas overall. By contrast, an individual with the reverse facilities is able to express his ideas through an apt selection of just the right words, while placing these within a rather terse matrix.

**1.2.3 Language Comparison, Language Change, and Observational Adequacy** The differential availability of expressive means is not only a psychological issue for the communicator, one perhaps best studied by the psychologist of communication, but also a universalist comparative issue across the world's various languages for the descriptive linguist to treat. In addition, the integratedness of language as a system within a broader communicative, and then psychological/sociocultural, system affects a particular language's pattern of change in the course of time—a matter for the diachronic linguist. These issues will be discussed more fully in section 7.

Though based on a fair amount of observation (including the cited examples), this chapter's discussion of communication points to the need for much more data, testing, and experimentation, on which the validity of any analysis ultimately rests. The present study is offered largely as a contribution to the kind of organizational thought that can help direct a fuller program of observation.

## 2 COMMUNICATIVE GOALS

Below, grouped in accordance with the earlier analysis of communicative functioning, individual communicative goals are listed. It is not assumed that any goal as listed has any psychological reality as a discrete unit. Nor is it assumed that the list of goals taken together constitutes a non-overlapping, gapless, and exhaustive coverage of purposive communication. Rather, the list is basically heuristic, intended to help map out the extent and contour of the domain of purposive communication. The psychological organizational realities for this domain may turn out to be quite different, involving subdivisions, hierarchizations, and relationships barely considered in this study.

A few distinctions relevant to the domain can be noted here, however. Different portions of communicative functioning differ in the degree to which at any moment they are, or can become, conscious in the individual and, correlatively, in the degree to which they afford her volitional control over the manipulation of means. To the extent that any function is unconscious, the more appropriate a term like “process” and the less so a term like “goal” is for it.

Second, the goals as listed differ greatly as to their variability or constancy during a communication. It is surely not the case that at each instant a communicator reassembles his configuration of goals from scratch. Rather, while some goals fluctuate swiftly (e.g., those pertaining to advancing a local idea), others remain relatively constant through long stretches and so have the same pertinence in each moment’s combination of goals (e.g., goals pertaining to communicating one’s mood or attitude).

The goals identified next will be discussed and exemplified in section 6.

(3) *Communication per se*

To get certain phenomenological content existing within oneself (ideas, feelings, perceptions, and so on) replicated within certain addressees

*Goals Pertaining to the Content of a Communication*

- a. To convey a particular propositional content or component notion
- b. To set the degree of specificity and salience of a whole proposition or component notion
- c. To organize the sequentiality of the contents (so as to direct how the ideational whole develops temporally in the addressee)
- d. To manifest (or project an image of) one’s character, mood, or attitude (toward the topic, addressee, situation, and so on)
- e. To signal the nature/type of the present communication

*Goals Pertaining to the Structure of a Communication*

- f. To conform to “grammaticality”: a communication system’s structural “design” properties
- g. To conform to “felicity”: a communication system’s preferences among expressive means (relative to a particular style)
- h. To conform to “aesthetics”: one’s own sense, or canons, of what is pleasing in a communication’s form

*Goals Pertaining to the Transmission, Reception, and Comprehension of a Communication*

- i. To accommodate a communication's temporal/physical manifestation to external temporal/physical exigencies, or vice versa
- j. To accommodate one's communication to the characteristics of the addressee's receptivity
- k. To ease (or, more generally, to control) the addressee's processing task

(3') *Communication in a Larger Context*

To condition the nature of one's communication, before and during its production, on the basis of one's assessments of one's self, one's addressee(s), and the remaining total context; and

To have, with one's communication, certain further interpersonal effects and noneffects

- l. To make a communication's content appropriate to the immediate or long-range context (and to the "metacommunication")
- m. To make one's communication satisfy some more general interpersonal intention or program pertaining to the addressee
- n. To adjust one's communication with attention to its potential effect outside the direct communicator-addressee linkage
- o. To initiate/maintain/terminate/avoid communication or some aspect thereof (such as topic)
- p. To engender, via one's communication, certain actions/states in the addressee (or others)

(3'') *Master Control*

*Goals Pertaining to Generativity*

- q. To conform to each moment's schema for the realization of one's communicative goals that arises in one by unconscious processes

*Evaluative and Remedial Goals*

- r. To maintain/repair one's communication on the basis of an ongoing monitoring of its adequacy in realizing one's communicative goals

Though these goals are treated further below, (q) deserves immediate attention since it involves a substantial addition to our notion of communicative functioning.

From the author's introspective observation, the production of a communication usually seems to be a two-staged process. In the first stage,



a not-fully-specified schema for a communication's overall formal and contentful structure arises in the individual. This schema is generated by unconscious processes that do most of the work of integrating the moment's communicative goals and conditions. Their work in finding an appropriate schema is perhaps eased by an initial check through a smallish set of "target structures," learned as the preferred or most common of the particular communication system being used.<sup>3</sup> The conscious experience of the schema's emergence, impressionistically, can be a sudden knowing in general what one is going to say and how to say it.

In the next stage, the actual communication is produced by following the schematic outline and particularizing its general/vague aspects with choices as to lexical items, "local syntax," and so on. No doubt, at times—varying with the person and the occasion—many "second stage"—type specifics arise as part of the schema itself or are filled in before the communication's actual production. But the majority of the processing for specifics would seem to take place at this second stage.

After one has progressed along a first-stage schema for a short while, or even before its implementation, the schema is apparently often scrapped and replaced by a new one as the result of a quick reassessment of its adequacy in realizing one's communicative goals (by the operation of process (r)). Such a phenomenon seems at work, for example, in a speaker's false starts, which perhaps reflect the successive arising and dropping of different schemas, or in a sudden shift of direction or a semi-independent section in an utterance. Schema formation, insofar as it yields speech-based structures, would seem to operate equally for the processes of speaking and writing. Whether it, or something comparable, operates as well for bodily expressivity, or for signing and writing by the congenitally deaf, remains to be explored.

### 3 COMMUNICATIVE MEANS

Some formal expressive means are listed below. They are given in some cases because of their relevance to later examples. There is in any case no assumption about them of natural entityhood or exhaustiveness—that is, similar avisos apply here as earlier to the list of goals. Various communication-systemic dimensions have been set up as rubrics and each means is placed under the most relevant one, although, as the divisional lines are drawn, many means partake of more than one dimension.

One's communicative goals, thus, are realized through choices among the expressive means in (4).

(4) *Systemic*

- a. the particular language/communication system

*Ideational*

- b. phraseology  
c. lexical items/other morphemes/lexicalization  
d. lexical-derivation processes  
e. omission/deletion

*Structural and relational*

- f. the syntactic structure of a constituent or sentence  
g. order (of words/phrases/propositions)  
h. repetition  
i. the verb's case-frame setup  
j. a nominal's grammatical relation

*Sonic or other physical medium*

- k. segmental "phon"ology  
l. suprasegmental "phon"ology  
m. other nonsegmental characteristics

*Temporal*

- n. flow management  
o. other temporal characteristics

*Kinesic*

- p. (nonsystemic) gesture  
q. physical action

Some of the means listed here require a bit of characterization.

(b) refers to how an idea is put or cast. This involves both the way a total ideational content is divided up and the way the particular subset of component notions is selected for explicit expression.

(h) refers to cross-referential relationships through text, including repetition of words as a grammatical or semantic means, repetition of sounds in poetry, and nonrepetition of words in certain literary styles.

(k) and (l) refer to the systematically organized aspects of any communication system's physical medium. "Phonology," as contrasted with "phonetics," refers to this component in spoken language; "emics" may be the only general term that would apply as well—for example, to signing. For speech, (l) here has its traditional reference to intonation, stress, and tone, but for signing, it is questionable that any (k)–(l) distinction should

be seen exactly between the manual and the nonmanual (as argued by Baker (1976)).

(m) includes reference to voice quality, pitch register, intonational spread, volume, volume spread, and enunciation (slurred ↔ precise) in the case of speech, and to comparable characteristics in the case of signing, such as the size, energy, and clarity of the motion. This as well as (o) may be classed together with (p) as a general kinesic component of communication, a highly expressive one operating parallel to the more strictly systemic one. (n) includes stopping, backtracking, hesitating, restarting, iterating, and stretching.

(o) includes reference to speed and rhythmic patterns.

(p) refers to facial, manual, and general bodily positions and movements. In the case of signing there may be no distinction between (m) and (p).

#### 4 THE CONCORD AND CONFLICT OF GOALS

On occasion, perhaps, all of a moment's communicative goals are in harmonious concord, with the resultant communication satisfying them all. More often, two or more goals held simultaneously are in conflict, requiring inconsistent or incompatible means for their realization.

An example of inconsistency is in the following communication by a young street person.

(5) You couldn't help us out with any part of 22 cents . . .  
 ((spoken with a monotoned rapid slur))

Here, the style of delivery (means (m) and (o)) seemed on the one hand to indicate that the speaker wanted to convey an attitude of a streetworn aloof nonchalance (goal (d)), while the semantic and grammatical complexity of the utterance (means (b) and (f)) seemed on the other hand to indicate a desire to manifest high ideational articulateness (goal (b)), perhaps for the pleasure of exercising a native talent. While the means that realize these goals can in this case co-occur, together they gave incongruously—and comically—opposite impressions of the speaker's character.

In the case of incompatibility, a communicator must decide in favor of one goal over the other (often, presumably, in accordance with their relative importance to him), or else manage to strike some other balance. As an example for both live and written discourse, a communicator with only one especially gripping item in his whole message has to choose between maximizing its dramatic impact by saving it for last (goal (c)) and gaining

the addressee's attention in the first place (goal (j)). This is because satisfying both goals would place the impossible demand on surface ordering (means (g)) that an item appear both exclusively at the beginning and exclusively at the end. Sometimes the communicator can effect a balance, putting part of the item first (the "teaser") and the best part last.

By contrast with most writing, where there is time to find just the right means to satisfy such goals as notional accuracy (a), logical sequencing (c), and satisfying style (h), in most live communicating the operation of the timing goal (i) often demands compromises from one's other goals in a continuing speed-versus-quality conflict. For example, if one has already paused too long looking for just the right word, one may have to grab at its nearest forthcoming neighbor, being ready at this point to pay the price of representing one's idea grossly in the interests of keeping one's turn or the addressee's attention. In this same interest, a person who has already made several false starts by discarding schemas may stick with the next one that arises and look to following it with emendations for any inadequacies it may have. Here, it is the monitoring and remedial process (r) that, as the deciseconds tick away, reevaluates priorities in the shifting balance of factors.

## 5 THE LIMITATIONS OF MEANS

Every expressive means of a communicative system has arbitrary gaps and limitations. The communicator, consequently, must draw in various proportions on them all to piece together an adequate realization of his goals.

To take an example (comparable to the "commercial scene" in Fillmore 1977), for English speakers to express any particular combination of the elements of a theft scene in different degrees of salience, they must select from the set of forms in (6) (T = thief, G = goods, V = victim). These forms draw in an irregular fashion on the use of three or four means: different lexical verbs (means (c)), different omission/deletion patterns or case frames (means (l), (i)), and different syntactic constructions (active/passive: means (f)).

(6) T steal	T rob V	G be stolen	V be robbed
T steal G	T rob V of G	G be stolen by T	V be robbed by T
T steal		G be stolen from V	V be robbed of G
from V			
T steal G		G be stolen from V	V be robbed of G
from V		by T	by T

In the “steal” column’s middle two forms, omission/deletion is the means used to pare down the number of elements explicitly mentioned. But, apart from the column’s top form, one cannot carry through with this same means to get all the one-element forms

- (7) Sam stole (again tonight). / \*Stole a necklace. / \*Stole from a dowager.

but rather must switch to the use of different verbs and voices (*A necklace was stolen. The dowager was robbed*).

The process of working around gaps in the means is so integral to the communication-producing system that, from its perspective, the means’ lack of thoroughgoingness, as in the preceding example, largely does not matter. Nor, from the perspective of conveying a message, are the differences between the means important. In the preceding, for instance, as (8) suggests, one can even draw on gesture (means (p)) as an equivalent of a spoken constituent, making up the full message complement in that way.

- (8) She got robbed  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{of her necklace} \\ \text{((+ a gesture to one’s neck as if grasping a necklace))} \end{array} \right\}$   
on the street.

A problem involving the limitations of means often arises in conjunction with the operation of the schema-forming process (q). For example, a speaker wanting to convey that she likes a man because he is charming and observant (goal (a)) and wanting to foreground the presence of these qualities at the beginning of her utterance (goal (b)), while wanting to name these qualities explicitly only at the end of her utterance (goal (c)), may come up with a first-stage schema for a pseudocleft equational sentence with final nominal slots. But as she proceeds through the production of an utterance in accordance with the schema, as in (9a), she runs up at the end against a lexical gap—a gap in means (c)): there is no noun for being observant. If she had foreseen that at the beginning, she might have come up with a different schema, but now, short of starting afresh, she is stuck with making some form of local accommodation by appeal to other means. One solution, as in (9b), would be the creative use of lexical derivation processes (means (d)) (at the expense of conforming to grammaticality—goal (f)). Another solution, as in (9c), would be to draw on the availability of other lexical items (means (c)) (though at the expense of fidelity to the original notion—goal (a)). A third solution, as in (9d), could be to form

a noun phrase (means (f)), though this might render the predicate too vernacular for the speaker's projection of self-image (goal (d)) or too asymmetrical for her aesthetics (goal (h)).

- (9) a. What I like about him is his charm and  
 b. ... his \*observance/observantness.  
 c. ... his perceptiveness.  
 d. ... how he's observant.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND EXAMPLES OF PARTICULAR GOALS AND MEANS

Most of the goals listed in section 2 (all except (h) and (o), here treated as self-explanatory) are discussed and/or exemplified below under separate headings. Their original phrasing should be reconsulted, since the headings are merely intended as reminders. The "subgoals" that appear under some headings are simply particular forms of the more generic goal named in the heading. The examples are not of any single kind but touch on the diverse range of communicative issues brought forth in section 1. Often, a particular example involves several different goals, so that its placement below is partly arbitrary.

### 6.1 Propositional Content (Goal a)

The conveying of propositional content or of a particular component notion is perhaps the aspect of communication most familiar in the study of language. Within that, though, the following cases explore some less noted phenomena.

*Example:* One linguist, during a lecture, got tongue-tripped in trying to say the phrase shown below with its 10 assorted sibilants (in italics). After several attempts at repair work, he stopped cold and then repeated the whole phrase in the manner indicated in (10).

- (10) certain specific aspects of the speech situation
- ((spoken in stressed rhythm with large sharp downward bends of the torso at each stress while the eyes are screwed shut))

In this finally successful production, the fact of repetition (means (h)), verbal qualities and rhythms (means (m), (o)), and body movements (means (p)) together seemed to convey the compound message in (11). The point here is that a form of propositional content is conveyed through communicative means other than those involving standard morphemes.

- (11) This phrase is a tough one, but I'm going to get it right this time.  
I'm having to work my way effortfully through an impedimentary medium.

Let me turn my slight embarrassment over muffing it into the humor of an exaggerated conquest over a worthy opponent.

*Subgoal:* To indicate one's perspective point: where one places one's mental eyes to look out over the rest of the scene.

*Example:* The difference in perspective between a smoker and a potential tobacconist in talking to a neighborhood resident—quoted in (12) and (13), respectively—is indicated by the choice between the two generic pronouns in English, *you* and *they* (means (c)).

- (12) Where can you buy cigarettes around here?  
or: Where do they sell cigarettes around here?

- (13) Where do they buy cigarettes around here?  
or: Where can you sell cigarettes around here?

*Example:* The difference in case-frame setup (means (i)) between (14a) and (14b) can reflect a difference in a speaker's imagistic perspective of either riding the crest of an advancing smoke wave out into a room or stationarily watching the wave approach from a position one has at the room's rear.

- (14) a. Smoke slowly filled the room.  
b. The room slowly filled with smoke.

*Subgoal:* To indicate a particular element as the topic (about which there is comment).

*Example:* The preferred English means for marking a referent as topical is to get the form that refers to it in sentence-initial position and as the grammatical subject (means (g), (j)). This preferred type of marking takes place for the form that refers to 'the pen' in (15a) in a sentence referring to an event of location. But where such marking is not possible for some sentence type—for example, for a sentence referring to an event of possession—an alternative means is used, that of a special intonation pattern (means (l)), as in (15b).

- (15) *In answer to:* Where's the pen?  
a. (It's) on the table.

b. JOHN has it.

<with a heavy stress and high pitch on *John* and with an extra low pitch on *has it*>

## 6.2 Degree of Specificity and Salience (Goal b)

*Subgoal:* To avoid explicit mention of an involved element because it is too emotion-laden, direct, hand-tipping, and so on.

*Example:* A Yiddish story in which a boy invites a girl to the woods has her answer, not with embarrassingly direct I/You, as in (16a), but with the special nonspecific pronoun (means (c)), as in (16b).

- (16) a. I can't go with you. You'll want to kiss me.  
 b. Me tor nisht geyn ahin. Me vet zikh veln kushn.  
 (One mustn't go there. One will want to kiss another  
 [= reflexive].)

*Example:* The two Danish words for addressing a single person as “you” have interpersonal connotations that one graduate student felt were both inappropriate—too formal or too informal—in addressing her professor. So she reformulated (means (b)) any sentence that would have included a “you” form if spoken spontaneously, like that in (17a), into a sentence lacking a “you” form, as in (17b).

- (17) a. Where are you going now?  
 b. Is there a class to go to now?

*Example:* On being asked by his visiting mother where he'd gotten his new mattress, a student—who'd spotted it in a “free box,” where articles no longer wanted by their original owners are left for others—answered as in (18a). Such a dissemblance makes no explicit false statement like (18b), but omits (means (e)) embarrassing elements from a fuller truth, like that in (18c), in such a way that the addressee is led toward the false picture.

- (18) a. Somebody didn't want it, so I took it.  
 b. Somebody I know didn't need it any more, so I took it from him.  
 c. Somebody or other threw it away in the free box, and I found it and took it.

*Subgoal:* To avoid or background the mention of an involved element because it is less important, irrelevant, or already known about.

*Example:* In English, omission or deletion as a means (e) for avoiding an unnecessary element must occur in conjunction with getting the right case-frame setup (means (i)). This is because such omission can take place very rarely for a subject (as seen in (18)), and only sometimes for a direct



object, but is generally quite grammatically feasible for an oblique object,<sup>4</sup> as exemplified in (19).

- (19) a. *Figure = direct object / Ground = oblique: only Ground omissible*  
 i. I sprinkled flour over the pan.  
 ii. Then I sprinkled sugar.  
     (understood as: Then I sprinkled sugar over the pan.)  
 iii. \*Then I sprinkled over the board.  
     (intended meaning: Then I sprinkled flour over the board.)  
 b. *Ground = direct object / Figure = oblique: only Figure omissible*  
 i. I sprinkled the pan with flour.  
 ii. Then I sprinkled the board.  
     (understood as: Then I sprinkled the board with flour.)  
 iii. \*Then I sprinkled with sugar.  
     (intended meaning: Then I sprinkled the pan with sugar.)

*Example:* The fact of air transit, salient in (20a), can be backgrounded, as in (20b), by its conflation with the verb (means (c)); = lexicalization, as treated in Talmy 1975b: GO + by-plane = *fly*.

- (20) a. I went to Hawaii last month by plane.  
 b. I flew to Hawaii last month.

### 6.3 Sequencing (Goal c)

*Example:* For the propositional content that the communicator wants to convey in (21), the sentence in (21a) probably has the smoothest phrasing, thus satisfying goals (g) and (h). But the communicator may consider it more important that the notion with the most wallop appear at the end for the greatest dramatic effect (goal (c)), and so will recast the way the idea is put (means (b)) to get it there, as in (21b).

- (21) a. You're really a thief disguised as a philanthropist.  
 b. You act like a philanthropist, but you're really a thief.

*Example:* Where Event 1 occurs before Event 2, a communicator who refers to these events may want her addressee to cognize them in the same order that they occurred in and, hence, want to avoid a formulation like that in (22a). Ways for realizing this goal in English include the use of a different lexical form for the subordinating conjunction (means (c)), as in (22b); preposing the subordinate clause (means (g)), as in (22c); and the use of the “copy-cleft” construction (discussed in chapter I-6)—means (f)—as in (22d).

- (22) a. E2 after E1: She went home after she stopped at the store.  
 b. E1 before E2: She stopped at the store before she went home.  
 c. After E1, E2: After she stopped at the store, she went home.  
 d. E1, and then E2: She stopped at the store, and then she went home.

#### 6.4 One's Character, Mood, and Attitude (Goal d)

Goal (d) is realized largely by one's (momentary) "style," which comprises selections as to the dialect or language used (means (a)) and as to elements of vocabulary, syntax, delivery, and kinesics (means (c), (d), (m)/(o), (p)). Via style, one can, for example, express one's character as macho or upper class, one's mood/state as excited or vulnerable, and one's attitude toward the topic as approving or disapproving, toward the addressee as friendly, deferential, or disdainful, and toward the situation as formal or informal. One example was already discussed in connection with (5). The following additional examples show that one's character can be projected as well by selection as to the propositional content expressed, and one's mood by the use of special morphemes.

*Example:* On his professor's clarifying an earlier point, one graduate student responded as in (23).

- (23) That's what I misunderst- had in mind as a question.

The student's mid-utterance correction might have been undertaken solely in the goal of propositional accuracy. But it might also have resulted from a desire to be regarded one way as against another—say, as comprehensionally skillful rather than as easily confused.

*Example:* While riding through the countryside, a mother might speak to her child in Yiddish as in (24a), or as in (24b) using the so-called "diminutive" noun endings.

- (24) a. Gib a kuk oyf di ki.  
       'Give a look at the cows.'  
 b. Gib a kuk oyf di kielekh.  
       'Give a look at the cows-diminutive.'

In the former, the mother simply directs her child's attention to a sight. But in the latter, parallel to this, she expresses warm affection for the animals, or for her child, or in empathy with her child's potential enjoyment of the animals. The diminutive morphemes do not affect the propositional content, for there is no implication that the cows are small,

young, or even intrinsically cute—merely that the speaker feels “cutely” toward them or something else in the situation.<sup>5</sup>

### 6.5 The Type of a Communication (Goal e)

There is an extensive range—greater than normally recognized and not at all cataloged—of intonational effects and delivery styles (means (l), (m), (o)) that signal how the segmental content of an utterance is to be taken—its illocutionary force, role in the ongoing interaction, and so on.

*Example:* Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1976) cite a teacher addressing her class, in part as in (25).

- (25) a. At ten o'clock we'll have assembly. We'll all go out together and go to the auditorium. . . . When he [the principal] comes in, sit quietly and listen carefully.  
 b. Don't wiggle your legs. Pay attention to what I'm saying.

They characterize the differences in her delivery style for (25a), signaling this as instructions for later to the group, and for (25b), signaling this as an immediate order to an individual.

*Example:* Aside from the fact that the content gives it away, the utterance by the 4;7-year-old boy quoted in (26b) (taken from the videotape *Making Cookies*; Ervin-Tripp 1975)

- (26) a. Woman investigator: No, you know what his name is [speaking of cameraman].  
 Boy: What?  
 Woman: Don't you remember?  
 b. Boy: His name is poopoo kaka. ((spoken with exaggerated enunciation, special melody, more chantlike rhythm, and laughing-sarcastic voice quality))

is clearly signaled by its delivery as intended as a teasing invitation to playful engagement with the man, rather than, say, a factual assertion of belief.

In general, a content and delivery that leave some doubt as to how a remark is intended (e.g., “You're really dumb!” said without a clear burlesque or laughing tone) often prompt an addressee to check the speaker's facial expression more closely for further cues, and have led to such culturally familiar expressions as “I can't tell if you're serious or joking” and “Smile when you say that!”<sup>6</sup>

## 6.6 Grammaticality (Goal f)

“Grammaticality” is intended here in a broad sense to refer to all of a communication system’s structural canons of well-formedness—for example, for a language, its lexical and phonological, as well as syntactic, particulars. Cognitively, adherence to grammaticality is a possibly distinct function that maintains itself against such other possible cognitive functions as a drive toward regularity of pattern. This may explain the perseveration through generations of otherwise easily closed gaps or of otherwise easily regularized pattern irregularities in a language. An example of such a persistent gap is the lexicosyntactic gap of the *say to* locution, which can occur in the passive, as in (27a), but not in the active, as in (27b). An additional example is the lexicoparadigmatic gap of some perhaps two score Russian verbs—used beside otherwise comparable gapless verbs—which lack a first-person singular present form, as in (28a), and require a circumlocution there, as in (28b) (as discussed in Hetzron 1975). A final example is the lexicoderivational gap of *observant* lacking a noun form, as already discussed in (9).

- (27) a. He is said to have once been a sailor.  
 b. \*They say him to have once been a sailor.

- (28) a. \*Pobežu. / \*Pobeždu.  
 ‘I (will) win.’  
 b. Oderžu pobedu.  
 ‘I (will) sustain victory.’

The drive to adhere to grammaticality can be seen in further ways. For example, consider a Russian speaker who has already uttered a string of adjectives with masculine agreement in anticipation of an upcoming masculine noun head but who then decides to switch to a different noun, one now with feminine gender. Often, such a speaker will start the phrase all over again to say the adjectives now with feminine endings, doing so even at the cost of other communicative goals, such as that of not disrupting the communicative flow. Or, again, consider the speaker cited in Jefferson 1972 who—after the other collocutor had mispronounced the Mona Lisa as the “Mama Lisa”—exclaims: “The *Mama Lisa*?” in sarcastic imitation. One may imagine that—even though the intended target form was clear enough from context—this speaker’s sense of well-formedness was disrupted by the collocutor’s mispronunciation, and was experienced strongly enough to prompt the exclamation, again even at the expense of the communicative flow.

Of course, other communicative goals sometimes win out over that of grammaticality. For example, in the preceding Russian example, some speakers might in fact just go ahead with the new feminine noun head, even though this engenders a break in concord. And we might also consider the following example.

*Example:* A bank customer who had asked the teller to check her savings balance spoke as in (29a). The first-stage schema that she had come up with to respond to the teller led her—as she realizes at her brief hesitation—to a grammatical blind alley. Her decision at this point is to just go ahead and complete the utterance ungrammatically rather than to start afresh with some new formulation such as that in (29b).

(29) a. Teller: Oh, if you have an automatic deposit. . . !

Customer: Yeah, that's what I wanted to see . . . if it happened.

b. What I wanted was to see if that happened.

As emphasized by the functionalist perspective, many aspects of language are to varying degrees on a flexible continuum regulated solely by what, communicatively, “works,” yet language seems mostly constructed on a two-tier plan of a “correct” fixed structure and the possibility of stretching or deviating from that. There appears to be a strong drive in the language learner to ascertain, and in the language user to adhere to, this “correct” structure, and it appears to have an innate psychological existence independent of the urge to communicate per se. The intuitively isolated sense for such a natively inbuilt drive is perhaps one of the factors that have led linguists through a history of paradigm and rule abstraction and to a notion of “competence” as opposed to “performance.”

### 6.7 Felicity (Goal g)

Words and constructions are not entered in a language user's mind like items in a dictionary or reference grammar, solely with their “absolute” values (as a textbook language learner or machine-translation programmer finds out), but are instinct with various additional qualities and relative weightings. It is discriminations among these latter—that is, the operation of goal (g)—that keep colloquial words and constructions out of written prose, those of written prose out of colloquy, and obsolescent forms out of both. Within the realm of the constructionally possible—which includes, for example, multiple center embedding—they distinguish the awkward from the smooth. In general, they constitute an intrapreferential dimension among the means of a communication system.

*Example:* In spoken Italian, a verbal that takes a preposition, like “have need of,” which is perfectly colloquial in a main clause as in (30a), gives rise in a relative clause to a sense of awkwardness over the pied-piped constituent “of which,” as in (30b). To avoid this awkwardness, a speaker will often prefer to use an altogether different verbal with a different case-frame setup (means (c)), like “be of use” as in (30c).

- (30) a. Ho bisogno del denaro.  
           ‘I have need of the money.’  
       b. Il denaro, di cui ho bisogno . . .  
           ‘The money, of which I have need . . .’  
       c. Il denaro, che mi serve . . .  
           ‘The money that is of use to me . . .’

*Example:* In the discussion of (15), it was said that for expressing an element as topic, the preferred means in spoken English is to get it as initial subject, but a special intonational means is used when this is blocked. The fact of preference is demonstrated in (31) with an example where a lack of blockage permits the use of either means.

- (31) *In answer to:* Where’s the pen?  
       a. It’s beside the ashtray. Preferred  
       b. The ASHTRAY is beside it. Dispreferred

## 6.8 Timing and Physics (Goal i)

The concern of this goal is to get one’s communication to reach the addressee by adjusting its temporal and physical execution so that it will pass through the “windows” open in the temporophysical transmissional medium, or else by adjusting the medium so that it will accommodate the communication.

This includes the following: starting one’s communication during another’s pause so as to gain the floor, not pausing too long so as to keep the floor, and aborting an already-begun communication if another communicator has not relented first (all involve means (n)).

In the case of speech, the adjustment can also include waiting until a fire engine has passed (means (n)), talking louder when there is heavy background noise (means (m)), and turning down a too-loud radio (means (q)).

In the case of signing, it can include waiting until someone walking between oneself and the addressee has passed (means (n)), and moving to a lighter area when it is too dark to see easily (means (q)).

### 6.9 The Addressee's Receptivity (Goal j)

Here are understood all the characteristics of the addressee that must be taken into account in forming one's communication to ensure the addressee's comprehensional reception. This includes:

- *The addressee's receptive capacity with respect to content and signal.* Thus, one reduces the level of semantic complexity for a child or a newcomer to one's communication system (means (b)). And one signs to a deaf signer and speaks more clearly to the nonnative and the hearing-impaired (means (a), (m)).
- *The addressee's openness to receiving a communication.* One has to gauge the addressee's focus of attention, attention span, and interest. Thus, to get an idea across within the narrow slot allowed by an impatient collocutor, one may have to speak fast, sacrifice specificity for brevity (such as *might be able to* for *could*) and generally consolidate one's message (means (o), (c), (b)).
- *The addressee's background knowledge.* Since an addressee has to have enough background information to be able to interpret a communication as intended, one must assess its amount and, if too low, either tailor one's message down to it or supply the missing information. The following example illustrates these points.

*Example:* A host said first (32a) and then, after a moment's pause, (32b) to a visiting friend.

- (32) a. Would you like some music on?  
 b. ... because I'm going to the bathroom.

Only after saying (32a) did the speaker realize that the listener could not have shared his own implicit background assumptions for the remark and therefore could not understand its intended meaning—namely, that the guest would be left alone during his imminent absence, perhaps in need of entertainment—and so he undertook with (32b) to correct that lack (means (b)).

### 6.10 The Processing Task (Goal k)

Efforts to ease the addressee's processing task can include circumventing a looming ambiguity, positioning related constituents into adjacency, and breaking up complex constructions.

Example of avoiding a possible ambiguity: *Denying* in (33a) could mean 'disclaiming facts' or 'begrudging possessions.' The verb in each

sense has some distinctive case frames. These can be evoked (means (i)) with “placeholder” nonspecific nominals, eliminating ambiguity, as in (33b) and (33c).

- (33) a. Then the child went through an imperious period of denying.  
 b. ... denying things.  
 c. ... denying people things.

Examples of breaking up a construction: Such an operation applies where there is a complicated constituent requiring much linguistic processing embedded in a complicated construction also requiring much processing. Without a breaking-up operation, the processing of the former must take place amidst the processing of the latter in what may be too cumbersome a performance task. One form of breakup is left dislocation—or, its generalization, “copy clefting,” as described in chapter I-6 (also the source of the examples below). This operation provides for the processing of the formerly embedded constituent separately and beforehand. And it leaves a placeholder proform that represents the Gestalt resultant of this latter processing in the matrix construction for the processing to occur there next, which is therefore also simplified.

Thus, the breakup process applied to the presumably more basic (a) forms below converts them into the (b) forms. The process applies in (34) within an English nominal constituent, in (35) to the nouns of a signed sentence (italicized words indicate the signs actually made), and in (36) to a whole clause of an English complex sentence.

- (34) a. Now we'll investigate the more general process of population stabilization.  
 b. Now we'll investigate *a more general process, that of population stabilization.*
- (35) a. Hank went-to Fresno.  
 b. You know *Hank*? You know *Fresno*? Well, *he-went-there.*
- (36) a. We stayed home because it was raining.  
 b. It was raining, so (< and because of that) we stayed home.

### 6.11 The Semantic Context (Goal I)

*Subgoal:* To make the content of a communication appropriate to the “metacommunication.”

For the most part, the content explicitly expressed by the actual words, phrases, and sentences of a communication, whether from a single source



or in an interchange, constitutes a dotting of disconnected islets of information from the perspective of a seamless logical continuum. A fuller, more continuous conceptualization exists in the minds of the intercommunicators as a skein of knowledge and familiarities, presuppositions and expectations, presumptions and deductions. The interactional relation between the manifest communication and this metalevel is that the former have interpretable significance only within the context of the latter, while the latter emerges, shifts, and undergoes emendation from the input of the former.<sup>7</sup>

The metalevel can be seen as a generalization of the notion of the “speech act” (e.g., an assertion, order, request—as in Searle 1969) or of the “adjacency pair” (e.g., question/answer, request/compliance, warning/heeding—as in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). These notions isolate out a singular or binomial superordinate communicative significance that holds over a short stretch. The metacommunicative level is, rather, a skein interwoven of these along with further elements.

*Example:* The *because* back in (32b) has no parsable meaning within the manifest communication of (32) taken by itself. It is pragmatically present, rather, as a connective to an implicit—certainly unspoken—metacommunication something like the explanation in (37).

(37) “I ask you that not because, as you might at first have thought, I felt you might like some background music as we talk, but because I’m going to the bathroom and you’ll be left alone, possibly in need of entertainment.”

*Example:* On a hot day, a customer interacted with the cashier in a drugstore as in (38).

- (38) a. Customer: Are you aware that these are melting? ((putting some candy bars on the counter))  
 b. Checker: There’s nothing we can do about it.  
 c. Customer: No, I mean . . . hh ((breaking into a smile))  
 d. Checker: Oh, they really are! ((feeling a candy bar))

The checker’s response in (38b) shows that she had taken the customer’s metacommunication in (38a) to have been

“I want to complain about the poor quality you personnel keep your merchandise in.”

The customer, realizing this meta-miscommunication, seeks in (38c) to explicitly repair it:

“*No*, I didn’t mean that the way you took it, *I mean* that the melting is funny and I wanted to share the humor of it with you.”

The checker in (38d) seems then to metacommunicate:

“*Oh*, now I see what you meant. I’m sorry I reacted as if you were being surly, and let me make amends with a heightened response now to your original intent.”

### 6.12 The Interpersonal Context (Goal m)

The use of a communication system (say, speech) between people is certainly not the starting point of interpersonal relations—not phylogenetically, developmentally, or in terms of present psychological functioning—but it, rather, fits in as a component within the context of these latter phenomena.

Thus, politeness in verbal behavior is in basis the counterpart of a general predisposition of consideration toward another—that is, courtesy in speech is a particular manifestation of a general program of doing that which makes someone feel good and avoiding doing that which makes him feel bad. Likewise, curttness in one’s verbal interactions with another is likely one manifestation of a general feeling toward him, such as aversion.

*Example:* The same boy quoted in (26) at another time has the following interaction with his father.

- (39) Boy: Daddy, how come you’re here? ((father has just come in))  
 Father: Well, this is where I live.  
 Boy: Uh-uh. You live someplace else. ((pulls on father’s shirt))  
 Father: Where?  
 Boy: You live in Colorado. ((said in teasing singsong))

The boy and his father have a warm rapport based on teasing play. On the boy’s part, this latter is realized both nonverbally—here with a mildly provocative physical encroachment (the shirt tug)—and verbally with joking of the form: asserting the opposite of a known characteristic of the addressee.

### 6.13 Heed to Outside Effects (Goal n)

Aside from its intended purpose as a transmission from a communicator to an addressee, a communication is a physical entity that exists in the world and that therefore exerts possible effects on it. A communicator

can be cognizant of these possible effects, have certain desires with regard to them, and want to adjust the characteristics of the communication accordingly.

Such adjustments can include speaking softer (means (m)) so that others around will not be bothered; communicating one's message obliquely (means (b)) or in another code (means (a)) so that others around will not understand; speaking or signing gently (means (m)) so as not to tax oneself when one is ill.

#### **6.14 Intent for Further Effects (Goal p)**

One often intends consequences and effects for one's communication beyond its bare comprehension by the addressee. One kind of intended effect is to induce the addressee to perform a certain action, such as to answer a question or carry out a request or order. It is in fact such an intention for further action that turns an otherwise plain communication into a question, request, or order. Another kind is to induce the addressee into a certain state or mood—for example, to cheer someone up by recounting pleasant or diverting matters.

One may also intend effects on others around one outside of the explicit addressee. Thus, while manifestly addressing the addressee, one can introduce elements into the message that are intended for the others—for instance, information one wants them to have or hints one wants them to take (such as to let oneself and one's addressee be alone).<sup>8</sup>

#### **6.15 Monitoring and Repair (Goal r)**

It can be theorized that the faculty of assessing heard speech is (developmentally prior to and) partially distinct from that of producing speech, and that it comes to operate on the latter's output in a feedback loop that constitutes the initial linguistic self-monitoring system in the individual.<sup>9</sup> Subsequent development, as the theory might continue, involves the internalization of the monitoring process to progressively earlier stages in the preexpressional formation of an utterance. When such monitoring is conscious, one in effect "hears" with the "mind's ear" how an utterance will sound if produced. It is on the basis of monitoring, whether preproductional or postproductional, that an utterance, or any communication, is assessed for its level of adequacy in realizing the moment's communicative goals.

A communication that continues on unemended is usually to be taken as having passed the monitoring system's adequacy requirements of the

moment (unless the system is not operating, as happens no doubt at many moments of, e.g., play speech and language pathology). Otherwise, the operation of the system includes the following measures.

1. indicating the cancelation of an earlier ill-formed element, and replacing it with a well-formed one, in satisfying the goals for grammaticality, felicity, or aesthetics (f, g, h)
2. for an earlier propositional element, canceling and replacing it, qualifying it, emending it, or elaborating it, in satisfaction of the goal (a) of expressing certain ideational content accurately
3. halting the immediate topic and in its place giving auxiliary information, realized as needed for the addressee's comprehension (goal (j))

Example of (2): To a playmate, a 4;3-year-old girl says (from the video *Playing Doctor*; Ervin-Tripp 1975):

(40) When I lie down—When I bend over my back hurts.

The girl's original schema for her utterance seems to have had only loose control over ideational content, selecting a more common locution, "lie down," in the generally appropriate semantic area rather than the more accurate locution, "bend over." The girl corrects this, though, after hearing it.

Example of (3): A girl recounts a story to a friend as follows (taken from Keenan and Schieffelin, 1975):

(41) My sister, when we were up in camp, when she was 12, and all the guys were 16, ((pause)) and 15, they don' wanna go out with 12-year-olds. So I told everyone that she was 13 1/2, almost 14.

More than likely, this episode exists in the girl's memory in two tiers: a less accessible body of background context and specifics, and a readily accessible upshot. The upshot here might be something like "My sister wanted the guys to go out with her, so I told them she was 14." In her own reminiscences, the girl might well become fully conscious only of the upshot and experience the remainder as an implicit background that lends sense to it. And she may rely on the upshot as a handle by which to draw the background tier explicitly forth into consciousness if necessary. In starting to tell the story, her first impulse, it seems, is to express the upshot. She immediately realizes, however, that she must first backtrack to prepare the ground for the addressee. In the present example, in fact, she makes a succession of such corrections, at each going back to a further point of background.

## 7 LANGUAGE COMPARISON AND CHANGE

The goals and means outlined to this point can vary in their combinations and strengths across languages or diachronically within a single language while retaining their character as an integrated system.

### 7.1 Language Comparison

Cultures and subcultures have different (constellations of) communicative goals and realize them with different (combinations of) expressive means, as investigated in works in the tradition of Gumperz and Hymes (1972). We address a more specifically linguistic issue within this: that languages have different means available for realizing the same communicative purpose, sometimes with typological/universalist implications.

*Example:* Returning to the example of answers to the question “Where’s the pen?”, first discussed in connection with (15), we notice that marking the topic element by getting it in initial position as sentence subject is the means used, in the case of simple location, in Spanish and Russian as well as English. Illustrations are provided by (42a) to (42c).

- |                      |                         |                        |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| (42) <i>English:</i> | a. (It’s) on the table. | d. <u>JOHN</u> has it. |
| <i>Spanish:</i>      | b. (Está) en la mesa.   | e. Lo tiene Juan.      |
| <i>Russian:</i>      | c. (Ono) na stole.      | f. (Ono) u Ivana.      |

But where, as in the case of possession, English is blocked from using this means because the topic must be expressed as the direct object in a rigid SVO system—and so must resort to the means of special stress and intonation, as in (42d)—the other languages proceed differently. Spanish, in (42e), still gets the topic in initial position, even though as direct object, because it has the availability of flexible word order (means (g)). And Russian, in (42f), continues to use the original preferred means—getting the topic element to be sentence initial as the subject—because of the availability of lexical means (c), namely, its preposition *u* ‘in the possession of’—which permits this formulation. Thus, the sentence in (42f) can be rendered as “(It) [is] in-the-possession of-John.

*Example:* With regard to marking an utterance for the way in which it is to be taken, discussed above in connection with examples (25) and (26), English speakers may employ the special intonation and delivery style (means (l), (m)) available in their language to mark the message in (43a) as a playful warning. But Atsugewi (a Hokan Indian language) has a

special verb-inflectional mode (means c)—which I have termed the “admonitive” and which is usually translatable as ‘I/you/he ... better watch out lest ...’—that exactly expresses a warning, often playful, as in (43b).

- (43) *English:* a. I’m going to tickle you!  
*Atsugewi:* b. Tamlawilcahki.  
 “You-better-watch-out-or-I’ll-tickle-you.”

*Example:* The preferences among alternative means that constitute felicity vary from language to language. Thus, the use of the passive (means (f)) to background a human subject is fairly natural in English, as in (44a), but is quite forced in Yiddish, as in (44b). In Yiddish, the use of the nonspecific-human pronoun (means (c)) is preferred, and when this is combined with the use of direct object fronting (means (g)), as in (44c), the resultant effect is virtually identical to that of the English passive.

- (44) *English:* a. That claim wasn’t believed.  
*Yiddish:* b. Di tayne iz nisht gegleybt gevorn.  
 ‘That claim was not believed.’ Forced  
 c. Di tayne hot men nisht gegleybt.  
 ‘That claim one did not believe.’ Natural

*Example:* Certain preferences among alternative means may be universal. But they can be exercised only in those languages with the availability of the preferred alternative and not in those that lack it.

Thus, there may well be a universal dispreference of pied-piping. As seen in (30), this means can be avoided in Italian relative clauses only by a shift to a different lexical verb. By contrast, English speakers have no problem: they can avoid a construction like (45a) because they can dangle their prepositions, as in (45b).

- (45) a. Any book on which I can get my hands ...  
 b. Any book I can get my hands on ...

Comparably, one means, as against others, may be universally easier in its processing requirements but be enjoyed only in those languages in which it is available. This would seem to be the case for a ready derivational means by which a notion lexicalized in one part of speech can be equivalently expressed in another, as *-ness* acts in English to convert an adjective into a noun. But English has no such means for converting other parts of speech into an adjective—as Yiddish does with its *-(d)ik* ending

—and usually must resort to the construction of a whole adjective phrase or to an altogether different lexical item.

(46) <i>English</i>		<i>Yiddish</i>	
<i>Other</i>	<i>Adjective</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Adjective</i>
uncle	av-uncular	feter	feterdik
now	current	itst	itstik
enough	sufficient	genug	genugik
soon	that will come soon	bald	baldik
this year	for this year	di yor	di-yorik
(e.g., a calendar for this year/*a this year('s) calendar: a di-yoriker kalendar)			

*Example:* In (42) and (43), the means for marking an element as topic and for marking an utterance as a warning were compared for a two- and three-language sample. In a like way, any single factor—structural, semantic, or otherwise communicational—can be checked through the panoply of communication systems for the scope and configuration of its possible manifestational range (a method that Greenberg (e.g., 1961) helped perfect within spoken languages).

Thus, the means for expressing modality (possibility, necessity, and so on) include the following: specific verb inflectional modes, like the subjunctive and optative in classical Greek; auxiliary verbs, like *can* and *might* in English; independent (adverbial) particles and phrases, like *perhaps* and *in all likelihood* in English; and a specifically modal sentence constituent, recognizable as a new grammatical category, as noted by Susan Steele for Luiseño and Aztec. Other means for expressing modality include an embedding matrix sentence, like French's *il faut que* 'it is necessary that . . .'; a special syntactic construction, "periphrasis," like that for necessity in Latin (e.g., where "I must go" is expressed as "[it]-is to-be-gone to-me"); and, in signing, certain head and facial gestures (e.g., where "I should have gone to the party" can be expressed by signing "I went to the party" while shaking the head with a grimace of displeasure, this having the meaning "It's unfortunate that (I) didn't").

## 7.2 Language Change

At every point in the history of its usage, a language is a comprehensive system whose available means together must handle all that needs expressing. Changes through time might accordingly be expected to show correlations between the dropping out of some means and the develop-

ment of others, as the pattern of available means maintains a shifting-balance level of adequacy. Li and Thompson (1976) have considered the expression of causation through the history of Mandarin from this systems perspective (as is also touched on in chapter I-8).

Consideration in this same light is provoked, as a possible further example, by three universalistically unusual syntactic means that coexist in present-day Tagalog (as treated in Schachter and Otnes 1972). The first is an elaborate system of verb voices—a lexical verb can be morphologically marked to fit into many alternate case-frame setups. The second is indication of a nominal's (in)definiteness by its surface case, accordingly mediated by the first system. The third is the relativization of a clause by the participialization of its verb; again, the first system permits the general applicability of this means by allowing a nominal of almost any underlying case to become subject. One may speculate that these three means developed in correlation with each other. If, for example, for other reasons Tagalog's precursor had lost, or been blocked from developing, independent morphemes to mark definiteness and relativity—as English, for one, has in its *a/the* and *which/that*—that condition might have spurred the development of the more unusual means and the elaboration of the voice system to undergird them.

### Notes

1. This chapter is a moderately revised version of Talmy 1976a.
2. The individual's pattern of balances does not, of course, stop within the confines of his communicative system, but extends into the rest of the personality. For example, a person with a great need to express himself but with a low degree of verbal facility may need to accommodate to the resultant standstill with the rest of his psychological system. (This could include a solution—e.g., possibly, going out dancing more often and putting more expression in the dance movements.)
3. Such structures, again, are understood to consist not only of a syntactic framework, but also of the pattern in which semantic content is distributed over that framework. Their familiarity is what enables an interlocutor, in the case of conversation, to project the arrival of a suitable entry point (as discussed in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974).
4. Here, it can be said that the whole oblique constituent undergoes “pied-piping deletion,” for the preposition follows its nominal into extinction.
5. This last matter—that the diminutive morphemes often express a more global feeling, though attaching to the nearest noun—is clearer in the example of a speaker fondly urging his cat *Es fun dayn shisele* “Eat from your bowl-diminutive!” though feeling nothing for the cat's everyday bowl.



6. A metalinguistic awareness of this distinction between the propositional content of the segmental forms of an utterance and the discourse purpose of the utterance's delivery can be seen in a certain form of wordplay once current among schoolchildren. In this wordplay, a speaker follows his own or another's remark with a quotative aside, of the kind found in written prose, that specifies the style and intent of the remark. An example is the following: "‘We could go to the movies,’ he suggested tentatively."

7. Garfinkel (1972:78) sees the same two levels—referring to them as "documentary evidences" and the "underlying pattern"—and the same interrelation between them: "The underlying pattern was not only derived from a course of individual documentary evidences but the documentary evidences in their turn were interpreted on the basis of 'what was known' and anticipatorily knowable about the underlying patterns."

Fillmore (1975:136–137), using the terms "text" and "image," clearly has a comparable notion: "A text induces its interpreter to construct an image. . . . The image the interpreter creates early in the text guides his interpretation of successive portions of text."

Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1976) speak in a comparable way of "conversational communication" generating "context" and of the latter's helping the interpretation of the former.

8. It may be alternatively interpreted that the fraction of one's message that is directed obliquely is in its own right a communication to an addressee, here a covert one, perhaps better referred to as the "intended recipient."

9. In this vein, Zakharova (1958:283–284) notes from her investigations of Russian preschoolers' language acquisition: "In the process of constructing case forms of unfamiliar words, children often pronounce them aloud with different endings, as if deciding in this manner which form would be the correct one in the given case, correcting themselves and deciding on the ending only after that."

She goes on to speculate: "The choice of the correct endings through oral repetition of some of them can probably be explained by the fact that the additional sound and kinesthetic signals from the speech organs, entering the cerebral cortex during the process of repetition, facilitate control over the speech activity of the child. . . ."