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87 Faces of the English Clause

Richard Pittman and David Thomas

Nguyen Dang Liem, in his Contrastive Analysis of English and Vietnamese, Vol. 1 (Canberra, 1966), gives a very useful table (page 47) of 87 English clause types. This is a review and commentary on that chart, with two proposals: 1) that all of the types be derived from one sentence -- They gave him the presidency -- rather than from several, as in Liem's original formulation; and 2) that the relationships between the major types be described by means of a two-branched tree. The first proposal is by Pittman, the second by Thomas.

By way of explanation of the original chart, it is important to point out a detail which Liem did not mention--that the horizontal dimension represents the internal structure of the clauses, while the vertical dimension represents relations between these and other clauses in discourse.

Descriptions on the left and top of the chart label the types by triangulation. Formulas on the right and bottom should be combined (like those on the top and left) to give the clause for each box. An occasional morphophonemic or permutation rule will complete the picture.

The two branches of the tree, and thus all the clause types in both branches, can in this case be related by a few transformations. For example, the original sentence They gave him the presidency will generate all the clause types on Chart I. This double transitive (3) is transformed into a single transitive (2) by deletion of him, and into an intransitive (1) by the further deletion of the presidency. To those who may be troubled by the fact that (1) is a transitive with elliptical object rather than an intransitive, the answer is, as pointed out in "Chrau Clause Batteries",¹ that since the intransitive patterns in all respects like the zeroed-object transitive, the selectional difference between them ("transitive verbs take an object") may be handled in the lexicon and need not be included in this kind of chart.

To get from the double transitive (3) to the attributive transitive (4) requires going from They gave him the presidency to They elected him president; it is making the jump from one branch of the tree (Chart II) to the other. This is accomplished by the following transformation:

$$A \text{ V}_{tt} \text{ N}_1 \text{ N}_{\text{what?}} \rightarrow A \text{ V}_{n\text{comp}} \text{ N}_1 \text{ N}_2$$

in which A represents the actor; V_{tt} represents a double transitive verb (give, buy, make...); $\text{N}_{\text{what?}}$ is a noun which may be replaced by what? in this formula; $\text{V}_{n\text{comp}}$ is a noun-complement verb (make, name, elect...) as in "name him king", in contrast to a verb-complement verb as in "help him run", an adjective-complement verb as in "shoot him dead", and a preposition-complement verb as in "blow me down"; and N_2 is a noun whose lexical referent is the same as $\text{N}_{\text{what?}}$ while its identificational referent is the same as N_1 .

Though this transformation may seem complicated, its appropriateness is at least partly attested by the fact that They elected him president is a specific paraphrase of the more generic They gave him the presidency. It is further strengthened by the fact that all but the whom transforms of the

attributive transitive (4) branch of the tree parallel exactly the transforms of the double transitive (3) branch.

The above rule shows how in some cases it is possible to jump from the end of one branch to the end of the other branch of the tree (Chart II). There are other simple principles that show how any clause that fits somewhere on one branch of the tree can take all of the transforms below it on the same branch or on the trunk of the tree. Each type (grouping) on the tree represents a set (battery) of transforms which are mutually transformable into each other.² A clause that takes a certain battery of transformations can also take all the batteries in the path below it on the tree, and, many of the lower batteries will represent or be identical in surface structure with, elliptical forms of the original clause. Thus I hit him enters into the various forms of the Transitive battery, cannot enter into the Double Transitive (3) or Double Transitive Passive (6) batteries which are higher than it on the tree, but can enter into the Transitive Passive (5) battery as He was hit by me, etc., into the Intransitive (1) battery as I hit, etc., and into the It-Statative (10) battery as It was I, etc.

It can similarly be demonstrated for the other branch of the tree that a clause entering at a certain battery can take all the forms in that battery and the batteries below it but cannot take the forms in the batteries above it or the batteries in the other branch except in the cases described above where branch jumping is possible. And it is here suggested that this tree and its rules may hold for all normal clauses and clause transforms in English.

Terminologically it is proposed that the term clause battery be restricted to those forms all of which are mutually transformable; the term clause root be used for the underlying structure (such as I-as-actor, him-as-goal, hit-as-action) which is manifested in the various forms in the battery; the term battery tree be used for a tree showing the transformational and elliptical relations between batteries; and the term clause paradigm for the total set of transforms, full and elliptical, that a particular clause root can take.

CHART I

	1. Intransitive	2. Single Transitive
1. Declarative	They gave.	They gave the presidency.
2. Imperative	Give!	Give the presidency!
3. Yes-No Interrogative	Did they give?	Did they give the presidency?
4. Interrogative Subject	Who gave?	Who gave the presidency?
5. Interrogative Object		What did they give?
6. Extra Interrogative	Why did they give?	Why did they give the presidency?
7. Dependent Subject	...who gave	...who gave the presidency?
8. Dependent Non-subject		...what they gave
9. Dependent Relative	...that they gave	...that they gave the presidency
10. Extra Dependent	...why they gave	...why they gave the presidency
	S V(tt) S give	S Vt(t)Na S give presidency

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3. Double Transitive	4. Attributive Transitive	5. Single Transitive-Passive
1. They gave him the presidency.	They elected him president.	The presidency was given.
2. Give him the presidency!	Elect him president!	Let the presidency be given!
3. Did they give him the presidency?	Did they elect him president?	Was the presidency given?
4. Who gave him the presidency?	Who elected him president?	
5. What did they give him?	What did they elect him? Who(m) did they elect president?	What was given?
6. Why did they give him the presidency?	Why did they elect him president?	Why was the presidency given?
7. ...who gave him the presidency?	...who elected him president	...which was given
8. ...what they gave him	...what they elected him ...whom they elected president	
9. ...that they gave him the presidency	...that they elected him president	...that the presidency was given
10. ...why they gave him the presidency	...why they elected him president	...why the presidency was given
SVtt N ¹ Na S give B presidency	S VtnN ¹ N ¹ a S elect B president	Na beVt(t) Presidency be given

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6. Double Transitive-Passive   7. Attributive Trans-Pass.   8. Noun-complement Equational

1. He was given the presidency.	He was elected president.	He was president.
2. Let him be given the presidency!	Let him be elected president!	Let him be president!
3. Was he given the presidency?	Was he elected president?	Was he president?
4. Who was given the presidency?	Who was elected president?	Who was president?
5. What was he given?	What was he elected?	What was he?
6. Why was he given the presidency?	Why was he elected president?	Why was he president?
7. ...who was given the presidency ...to whom the presidency was given	...who was elected	...who was president
8. ...that which was given him		...what he was
9. ...that he was given the presidency	...that he was elected president	...that he was president
10. ...why he was given the presidency	...why he was elected president	...why he was president
N ¹ beVttNa B be given presidency	N ¹ beVtnN ¹ a B be elected president	N ¹ beN ¹ a B be president

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9. There Stative10. It StativeSymbol for component relating
clause to context

1. There was a president.	It was he.	period	1
2. Let there be a president!		Exclamation point	2
3. Was there a president?	Was it he?	Yes/No question mark	3
		S $\Rightarrow$ <u>Who?</u>	4
5. What was there? ~ There was what?	What was it? ~ It was what?	O $\Rightarrow$ <u>What?</u>	5
6. Why was there a president?	Why was it he?	Why?	6
		S $\Rightarrow$ relative pronoun <u>who</u>	7
		O $\Rightarrow$ relative pronoun <u>what</u> ;	
		IO $\Rightarrow$ relative pronoun <u>whom</u>	8
9. ...that there was a president	...that it was he	relative pronoun <u>that</u>	9
10. ...why there was a president	...why it was he	relative pronoun <u>why</u>	10
there be N ¹ a	it be N ¹		
there be president	it be B		

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CHART II

Where there are appropriate morphological or lexemic transforms there may be crossing over between branches of the tree.

FOOTNOTES

1. David Thomas "Chrau Clause Batteries", chapter 11 of Chrau Grammar, University of Pennsylvania dissertation 1967 (unpublished). See also in Part III (Seminar summaries) of this Work Papers volume.
2. See John Banker, "Bahnar Clause Paradigms", in Mon-Khmer Studies I (SIL Saigon 1964), for a carefully worked out set of clause batteries with their constants and multipliers.