

Participants -II

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Semantic roles

- **Helen** drove to **the party**
- **He** swatted **the fly** with **a newspaper**
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List of themes: Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Beneficiary, Instrument, Goal, Source, Location

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- Source: Entity from which something moves (The plane came back *from Osaka*)

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- In the following sentence: *The police saw the robbers leaving the bank*, the police are *experiencers*
- Can you think of sentences which have as their subjects the following:-
 - ▶ Agent
 - ▶ Patient
 - ▶ Theme
 - ▶ Recipient
 - ▶ Instrument

Some possibilities:-

- John hit Peter

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- The arrow flew through the air/ The glass fell
- She received a demand for unpaid tax
- The key opened the lock

Thematic role grid

- Associated with each verb is some grammatical information: is it transitive/intransitive/ditransitive
- But also associated with each verb is knowledge of semantic roles
- We can associate each verb with a thematic role grid

put V: < AGENT, THEME, LOCATION >

This shows us that put is a three argument verb associated with certain thematic roles

All of these roles are required– hence it's not possible to say **John put the book*

We have to say *John put the book on the table*

- On the other hand, it's possible to say *John read the book*:- because the theta grid for *read* has only two **participant roles**

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Verbs that share common thematic grids can form classes:

E.g verbs of Transfer in English will contain examples like *give, lend, supply, pay, donate, contribute*

Here, transfer is encoded from the perspective of the AGENT

V: < AGENT, THEME, RECIPIENT >

Barbara loaned money to Michael

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- V: < RECIPIENT, THEME, SOURCE >
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- V: < RECIPIENT, THEME, SOURCE >
- Michael borrowed the money from Barbara
- Examples of this type include: receive, accept, buy, purchase, rent, hire

- Flexibility in semantic roles is offered by using the *passive voice*
 - ▶ Billy fed the horses (Active)
 - ▶ The horses were fed by Billy (Passive)

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- ▶ In the sentence above, we have a *past participle* 'damaged', and the sentence is passive
- ▶ However, the headline writer has chosen to omit the verb 'be'
- ▶ Newspaper headlines allow passive forms to be written this way: however in most other contexts, passive form would be *City hall was damaged by storms*
- ▶ To form the passive, we need both the participial form of the verb and the auxiliary (most commonly *be*) which provides tense information e.g. *City hall is damaged by storms* or *City hall was damaged by storms*

- In the active sentence, Billy is the AGENT and the subject, whereas horses is the PATIENT and object
- In the passive version, the PATIENT is the subject and the AGENT occurs as part of the prepositional phrase *by Billy*
- The passive sentence allows the speaker to describe the situation from the point of view of the PATIENT
 - ▶ Billy fed the horses (Active)
 - ▶ The horses were fed by Billy (Passive)
- A passive voice may be used to obscure the identity of the AGENT

- I was allowed to believe things that weren't true



Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene expresses some regret about QAnon, other conspiracy claims

- An agent may be so far backgrounded that it becomes an implied participant
- *The horses were fed*
- The foregrounding of the patient and demotion of the agent alters the perspective for the listener
- This choice of passive depends on what the speaker believes is more salient in the conversation

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- Compare these to their active counterparts
 - ▶ Someone donated this money to the school
 - ▶ His grandmother gave him a camera

- However, the general pattern is that the grammatical *object* is always made the subject
- The recipient in the example below (her) is an indirect object, whereas garage is a direct object
- John built a garage for her
- *For her was built a garage by John
- A garage was built for her by John
- We can also see this in the example
- He opened the door with this key
- *With this key was opened the door by him

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Passivize the following:

- 1 He loaded hay on to the tractor
- 2 He loaded the tractor with hay

- *The tractor was loaded hay on by him
- The hay was loaded on the tractor by him
- Only objects can be usefully passivized

- English is also considered to passives formed with verbs other than *be*
 - ▶ be-passive: Mary was shot on purpose
 - ▶ Mary *got shot on* purpose
 - ▶ I *had this worked on* by a carpenter