

Assignment: Jackendoff's Thematic Hierarchy Condition

Ling 610: Syntax II (Bruening)

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1 Thematic Hierarchy

Jackendoff (1972, ch.2) argues that a Thematic Hierarchy Condition of the following form constrains the application of the passive:

- (1) Thematic Hierarchy Condition
The passive *by*-phrase must be higher on the Thematic Hierarchy than the derived subject.
- (2) The Thematic Hierarchy
 1. Agent
 2. Location, Source, Goal
 3. Theme

(Take this condition to refer to the demoted subject that *would* appear as a *by*-phrase, even if it is not present.)
Examine the following data (some of it from Postal 1990). Which are explained by the Thematic Hierarchy Condition, and which are not? Do you have to make any assumptions regarding particular thematic roles in order to make the Thematic Hierarchy Condition explain these data? Do you need to add additional thematic roles, and if so, where would they have to fall on the hierarchy? Are any unexplained even with additional assumptions?

- ✓(3) a. ^{location}James had three kangaroos. Theme
- b. * Three kangaroos were had by James. 7 location
- ✓(4) a. The ^{location}sailors neared the brothel. 4, 5 Theme 7 location
- b. * The brothel was neared by the sailors.
- ✓(5) a. ^{Theme}Martin entered the Navy in June. Theme
- b. * The Navy was entered by Martin in June.
- ✓(6) a. Elizabeth has dated ^{agent? who op?}space aliens. agent? who op?
- b. * Space aliens were dated by Elizabeth. location location
- ✓(7) a. ^{location}Kurt lives right here.
- b. * Right here is lived by Kurt.
- (8) a. This movie stars Madonna in the lead role. ?
- b. * Madonna is starred by this movie in the lead role. location < Theme
- ✓(9) a. ^{location}Billy got a nasty cold.
- b. * A nasty cold was gotten by Billy.
- ✓(10) a. ^{agent? who op?}The Queen of Sweden baked me some apple strudel. agent? who op?
- b. * Some apple strudel was baked by the Queen of Sweden.

