Language as Ideology

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Chapter 2

Transformations and truth

(i) *Transformations and reality*

Ideology involves a systematically organized presentation of reality. How then can ideology be defined without a prior description of the truth? All such descriptions involve language, and presenting anything in or through language involves selection. Newspaper reports are very good examples: a reporter may witness an event and then be faced with the choice of calling it a *demonstration* (or a *demo*), a *riot*, a *street battle*, *war on the streets*, a *confrontation*, or so on. As he writes his report in whole sentences he needs to make the further selections of verbs (representing the actions) and other attendant circumstances (other people involved, effect of the actions, place where it happened). So the reporter might choose *demonstrators confront police* or *police confront demonstrators*; *rioters attack police* or *police attack rioters*; *police disperse rioters* or *riot disperses*. As readers of newspapers we know the forms, and we know the choices. We also know which papers tend to make which choices, and generally we act on our knowledge by buying one paper rather than another, in most cases the paper that challenges our own assumptions least of all. These initial selections are crucial, for they set the limits within which any ensuing debate or thinking or reworking of 'reality' takes place. We will discuss this process of classification in much more detail in chapters 4, 5, and 6. For the moment we wish to focus on the processes of interpretation, reorganization, reworking, which we can and do perform on the 'reality' presented to us through a given linguistic form.

Let us assume a homely situation, familiar to some, if only at second hand. Imagine a situation where some job was to be done by someone, and someone else asks whether it has been done: it might be the emptying of the garbage can. The wife might ask *Has the garbage been emptied?* to which she gets the enraged response *You know bloody well I've been out all day, how could I have emptied the garbage can?* (or some version of this). We can ask: Why did the husband get angry? and how did he know that his wife had been aiming this at him? After all, he had not been mentioned.

The answers lie in the fact that the wife had chosen to present reality in one way, but then 'transformed' that version of reality into one which differed from the original version. The original form was one in which the husband appeared as the person who was supposed to do the emptying: *Have you emptied the garbage?* In the 'transformed' version *you* had disappeared; it has been deleted by the wife, using the linguistic process of turning an active sentence into a passive one. We can show this in a slightly formal way in two stages, as follows:

i. Have you emptied the garbage? ⇒ Has the garbage been emptied by you?

(where the double arrow means 'has been transformed into'); then by deleting the reference to *you* we get

ii. Has the garbage been emptied by you? ⇒ Has the garbage been emptied?

In the first stage the order of *you* and *garbage* has been reversed, changing the theme of the sentence ('what the sentence is about') from *you* to *garbage*. The second process deletes reference to the actor of the action, *you*. If we put ourselves in the position of the husband trying to understand the wife's utterance, we see that he has to go through this process in reverse. If we reconstruct his process of interpretation, it might go something like: this question is about the garbage being emptied, though it doesn't say by whom. Who does she mean should have emptied the garbage – oh, me! This sentence is really about me emptying the garbage (or actually about me not emptying the garbage). Why didn't she come straight out and say so! This constant sly nagging really gets my goat: I'll tell her!

The wife, of course, might have seen things differently: I want him to empty the garbage, but I can't order him to do it, so I must do it indirectly, and if I mention him directly he'll fly off the handle, so I'll ask generally about the garbage without mentioning him, he'll get the message, and he can't get back at me.

The wife is partly correct, for had she not deleted reference to *you*, or turned the active into the passive, that is, had she said *Have you emptied the garbage?*, then the husband's strategy might well have been to pick on the theme of the sentence, *you*, and make that the focus of the clash: *why has it got to be me? Why can't you empty the ... garbage?* So the wife's transformations are well motivated. It is clear that her initial selections *did* set the ground on which the confrontation took place, did limit the scope of the interaction. It is equally clear that her transformation of the lin-

guistic form served very specific and, as she felt, very necessary purposes.

In this chapter we look in close detail at some of the transformations which occur in various kinds of interaction, and speculate about the relation between linguistic processes and their ideological motivations. Like hearers and readers we start from the forms that are there, which, following linguistic terminology, we call surface structures. We attempt to recover the forms which were the starting point of the utterance. Again following linguistic terminology we call these the underlying structures. As in every speculative act, we may come up with the correct answer or we may not; and we assume that this is the situation we are all in as language users. In this approach we differ from most linguists, who assume that the underlying structures can always be clearly recovered. When we reach the underlying form we know that it is a hypothetical form. We also know that it is not the truth, for at that stage we have only reached that form in which the speaker or writer chose to present reality. Short of having been there ourselves and witnessed the 'same' event, we can get no nearer the truth than this.

As our first example for an extended analysis of transformations we have chosen an editorial from the *Guardian* of 20 December 1973. Here the writer has a more or less clear ideology, which provides the terms and structures in which he describes the situation to himself. An editorial is the place where the processes of selection and assimilation, of rewriting and transformation are most dense. It is here that the paper's ideology is clarified and re-established, reasserted in relation to troublesome events. It is also the place where the paper speaks most directly to its readership, presenting its perception of 'reality' in the form which it regards as most suitable for its readership. Ideologically, and therefore linguistically, we would expect editorials to be complex and revealing. Here is the text: its subject is the miners' overtime ban of the winter of 1972–1973, in response to which the government led by Mr. Heath introduced a three-day working week for industry.

A Necessary Measure

The three-day week for industry is extremely hurtful. A sudden blackout for a whole city the size of Leicester or Bradford is worse. It can kill people. Mr. Len Murray, speaking yesterday for the TUC, said that the three-day week for industry is 'no solution'. He also called it 'a national lockout' and 'nonsense'. Truly it is no solution. That can come only through negotiations with the miners, rail drivers and power-engineers. But the three-day week is an inevitable precaution

while coal stocks at the power stations are running down. The Government has been much criticized for not introducing petrol rationing sooner. Until the three-day week was announced last Thursday, Ministers were accused by the Opposition of being complacent and too slow to act. If the Government were to allow a situation in which power supplies to whole areas had to be cut off with minimum warning, it would be criminally irresponsible.

The figures given by the Prime Minister may or may not be the whole truth. He says that coal accounts for 70 per cent of electricity generation and oil for only 20 per cent. Deliveries of coal to power stations over the past four weeks have averaged less than two-thirds of what they were expecting. CEGB stocks stood at 18 million tons in October. They are now running down at the rate of about one million tons a week – three times the normal rundown. The three-day week and other electricity savings are expected to reduce coal consumption by about 400,000 tons a week. Painful though the savings must be, especially in January, they are common prudence. The Government knows that in early 1972 it was caught out by picketing of power stations which curtailed coal deliveries. The rail dispute is having a similar effect. The Government must take precautions now. It cannot wait to see what happens.

If normal working by rail drivers and engineers were to be resumed, the situation would be less difficult. But full working in industry – particularly in coal using industries such as steelmaking – will be impossible until the miners lift their overtime ban. It should not be forgotten that, by mutual agreement, essential maintenance in the pits is done on overtime. All weekend maintenance is technically on overtime. The ban therefore at once cuts production in ordinary hours. To say 'pay the miners' is too simple, as was argued here yesterday. Their position ought to be improved, but that cannot be achieved at one step or without agreed restraint by other claimants. These are matters for negotiation.

This editorial presents a complex judgment on a complex process. In understanding any process, causality is of crucial importance. If the causal steps are clearly indicated – those who started an action are specified, the effects are shown, and those affected are mentioned – then our judgments can be made on reasonably secure grounds (unless we have been told outright lies, but no linguistic analysis can guard against that anyway). The two actional models mentioned

in chapter 1 present distinct versions of causality. In the *transactive* model there is an *actor*, the *verbal process*, and an *affected* entity. Thus the source of the process (physical or other) is indicated in the *actor*, who is presented as the causer of the process; and the entity which is *affected* by the process is equally indicated, *actor* and *affected* being linked by the *verbal process*. In the example we discussed above the labels would apply in this way:

Have	you	emptied	the garbage?
	actor	*process*	*affected*

This is a rudimentary version of mechanical causation. The *non-transactive* model on the other hand presents only one entity directly involved in the process: it is not, typically, distinguished as either actor or affected. Here is a sentence from the editorial: *It [the Government] cannot wait to see what happens*. It contains three clauses (much contracted on the surface) joined in a structure: *It waits/ it sees/ what [i.e. something] happens*. Taking the last of these,

Something	happens

it is clear that *something* is not an actor, it does not initiate or cause the process *happens*. Nor is it really affected; *something* is simply involved in the process, and it is not clear in what precise way. And the other two clauses, *it waits* and *it sees* (*it* being the Government) really are the same: there is no sense of the Government being actor in *it waits*, nor any clear sense of it being affected. In *it sees* it may be regarded as affected in a slightly stronger sense, but again it is not actor. The version of causation expressed in the non-transactive model is implicit or inherent causation, and spontaneous, sometimes self-caused action.

The editorial is about actions, and the absence of actions. So we might expect the predominant model to be the transactive. If the writer is concerned with clearly establishing causes and causal relations, then the transactive is the best model for the job. However, when we look at the language of the editorial, we find that there are just five occurrences of this model: *It can kill people*; *The three-day week . . . [is] expected to reduce coal consumption*; *picketing . . . curtailed coal deliveries*; *the miners lift their overtime ban*; *the ban . . . cuts production*. Closer inspection reveals that other forms that look like these are not transactives; many are verbal processes – *criticizing, announcing, accusing*. If a systematic theory, an ideology, is guiding the use of language here, then we would expect systematic use of linguistic forms to be evident. And some of these systematic uses are very quickly apparent. All the transactives concern events and actions by, or seen as the responsibility of, the miners. So the miners or circumstances brought about by them are shown here as

the only potent actors: the Government is presented in the syntax as unable to act. A closer look at the actors reveals another fact: all, with the exception of *the miners*, are either abstract nouns – *the three-day week, a sudden blackout, the ban* – or the results of actions (that is, actions turned into objects, verbal processes turned into nouns), or both – *the ban, picketing, a blackout*. Following linguistic terminology, we call the latter nominalizations. These are sentences, or parts of sentences, descriptions of actions and the participants involved in them, turned into nouns, or nominals.

Two kinds of exclusion operate here. First, the predominant syntactic form is not the transactive, so that the model which is about actions with causes and effects is very much in the minority. Second, certain categories of actor are excluded from those transactives which do appear. The Government does not appear, on the surface, as an actor, so that only one party in the dispute seemingly has the power to act. All the actors which do appear on the surface are abstract entities, with one exception, *the miners*. Taken together, these facts do point to a system, an ideology and its expression in language. The miners presumably would have seen things somewhat differently. They might have seen their claim for higher wages very much in terms of causes and effects, and for them presumably the Government was in a position to act – that was their demand. From their point of view we would have expected a much more transactive syntax, with the Government appearing in the role of actor. As far as the nature of the actions and actors is concerned, again the miners might have seen some of the processes in more concrete terms, so that there would have been less use of abstract nouns as actors. (This hypothesis could be tested by performing the same type of analysis on the relevant texts from the journal of the miners' union.)

The fact that abstract entities appear as actors (abstract nouns in the language representing abstract entities) is a feature of the metaphysics and science of English, which any theory of language will have to deal with. We shall discuss the whole question of the presentation of reality in language in chapter 3, when we deal at length with the linguistic models which English has. Here we are particularly concerned to explain two things: first, how some abstract nouns come into existence, come into the language, and second, how speakers use and interpret them. We start by looking at a noun which may or may not be in a dictionary of the English language, that is, one whose status as a stable word is somewhat doubtful. Here it is in the sentence in which it occurs in the text:

Picketing . . . curtailed coal deliveries.

If we asked speakers of English what the meaning of *picketing* was, they would probably explain it by describing the kinds of things involved: strikers, the action, a factory, or, in this case, a coal-depot. The noun is a contraction of a significant kind. The single word necessarily implies a particular kind of actor and a particular object of action. We might represent the process in this way:

strikers picket a factory⇒picketing

Because we can interpret the nominal as being 'derived from' the full sentence, the deletion of actor and affected is not a complete elimination. However, there are two major effects associated with that transformation, which amount to a quite radical changing of the original form. First, although we know that there was an actor and an affected, the specific identities of both have been lost. We can guess about their identity, but we can never be certain. Second, in the resulting surface form the only thing that meets us is the verbal version of the action which was performed, and in this way our attention is directed to what is present and directed away from what is no longer there. So the focus of the expression has been altered by the speaker, our vision has been channelled and narrowed. A last effect, which is perhaps somewhat more subtle, lies in the change in nature of the concept from *verb* to *noun*, and all the attendant changes in meaning which that change entails. Verbs in English tend to be about actions or processes, and they have to be placed in time. Nouns in English tend to be about objects, abstract notions, and concepts. This is only a tendency, but it is sufficient to direct our first interpretation.

An activity which was initiated and performed by the miners, in a specific place and time, now seems to have autonomous existence, and can appear as the actor in a new construction,

Picketing curtailed coal deliveries.

The affected entity in that sentence is yet another nominalization: again we would not meet the noun *coal deliveries* in a dictionary of English. Its source seems to be a sentence of the form

Someone [rail drivers] delivers coal.

In this nominalization only the actor has been deleted, and the verbal process and the affected participant have been 'taken into' the noun. This nominal is more informative than *picketing*. The existence of the two types of nominalization indicates that the writer of the editorial has choice in this matter. In the one case he is interested in a general activity that unionists at times indulge in

(*picketing*), in the other he wishes to be more precise, and so he brings more into the nominalization.

At any rate, the apparently simple sentence

Picketing curtailed coal deliveries

has, underlying it, a considerable complexity, a varied history of transformations. As readers of this editorial we should have to be alert and willing to engage in mental exercise to get beyond the seductive simplicity of the final form, with just three entities, and seemingly precise relations, where everything seems to be there on the surface. If we add to the real complexity of the sentence the fact that the verb *curtail* is a comparative, meaning roughly *provide not as much X as before*, we can see that few commuters on the 8.05 from Brighton would have the energy to perform the mental gymnastics required. Especially as they would have to perform them not once, but just about a dozen times on every full line of newsprint that they scan. After all, the crossword is there for mental exercise.

Having done the analysis, we could have this possible full version of the utterance: [Miners] *picket* [mines and coal-depots so that rail drivers do not] *deliver as much coal as before* [the start of the dispute to power stations] (where brackets indicate what has been deleted and italics indicate things present in the surface). This paraphrase contains so much more material than the concise actual surface form that readers would be forced to reflect on too many of the variables in the dispute. Reducing the complexity of an argument and limiting the terms which it can contain is a drastic intervention. Showing less means someone else seeing less. And seeing less means thinking less.

We can now readily fit two of the other nominalizations into this account: *It* [a blackout] *can kill people; The three-day week . . . [will] reduce coal consumption*. The former contains a noun derived from a sentence:

Something/someone blacks out a city⟹a blackout

Blackout is a word which we would expect to find in a dictionary. This points to one process which language uses to construct new words. If the contexts and the needs for a particular nominalization occur frequently enough, the nominalization will be taken into the vocabulary as a new and stable noun. *Picketing* is probably well on the way to that status, *coal deliveries* less so. In the next example, *coal consumption* is probably close to *coal deliveries* in its status as a stable noun. The *three-day week* has passed out of its position as a candidate for word status with the passing of that particular

political dispute. It has a derivation which differs from the other two, and readers who are not familiar with that event in British history will have no way of recovering the underlying structure and the deletions. In the first place it is an abbreviation for *the three-day working week*; and this presumably derives from

Someone works for three days (out of the normal five).

The important point at this stage is that the process of nominalization is common to the examples discussed so far, and its functions are similar in all cases. In discussing the next two examples, *the miners lift their overtime ban*, and *the ban cuts production*, we begin to deal with words whose status as stable nouns is unquestionable. *Ban* and *production* will be found in any dictionary of English. Yet it is not difficult to see the affinities which these two words have with the ones we have discussed so far. Both are descriptions of actions which involve participants, both in fact are descriptions of transactive actions:

someone bans something⟹ ban
someone produces something⟹ production

In the case of *production* the *-ion* ending is an outward sign of its derivation, but *ban* has no such marking. There seems therefore a choice for a hearer as to how he or she might interpret these two words. First, we might assume that the speaker had in fact started from the full sentence form (as before), or at least was aware of the expanded form at some earlier stage in the production of the utterance. In this case it would be quite proper to regard these as nominalizations, though of a kind which have become so conventional as to be clichés. Second, we might assume that speakers use these words, and hearers understand them, as though they were like *apple* or *bench*, but referring to things which happen to be abstract, not concrete physical things. For this kind of speaker or hearer, the linguistic form creates a world of thinglike abstract beings or objects, which are capable of acting or being acted on. Here language determines perception in two ways, by creating an alternative world which can only be 'seen' in language and by imposing this alternative world, with its apparent solid reality, on the material world, so that we no longer see or believe in the world of physical events. This is perhaps the most powerful effect that stable words have on us.

There is a third possibility, which is probably very common in practice. Speakers or hearers may produce or interpret such phrases sometimes one way, and sometimes the other. One condition that is likely to affect this is the importance of the utterance, and the

time spent producing or interpreting it. We choose our words carefully when something is at stake, and we need time for this. Clearly, for the writer of a *Guardian* editorial the composition of a leading article is a matter of importance. For the commuter it is something to be scanned quickly. Writers tend to create such shadowy worlds of abstract entities, and readers to live in them. Another condition that affects which kind of interpretation prevails is familiarity with the transformations involved. Obviously, someone who does not know the transformation will not be able to reverse it, to arrive at the underlying structure. Such transformational facility may be distributed unevenly, along class lines. That means that different groups within the one general language community will habitually 'read' the same words in radically different ways.

There is another quality that has been virtually removed by transformations from the surface of the language: negativity. We noted that *curtail* has an inherent negative. So does *ban*; its meaning might be paraphrased as *not do (something)*. When the miners decide to ban overtime, they decide not to work more than their 'normal' hours. But the form of the word does not show any negative, so that it seems that the negative has been completely absorbed into the new unit. All the other verbs in the sentences that we have discussed so far are like this: *kill* → *make not alive*; *reduce* → *not do as much as before*; *lift* (in the sense here used) → *no longer impose*; *cut* → *not* (produce) *as much*; and of course *curtail*. We may ask, as we did with the nouns, whether speakers and hearers are aware of the internal structure of these words, that is, whether they have an internal structure like that on the right of the arrow as their starting point, which is transformed into the single unit, or whether they have not. The effect of the single word which incorporates the negative invisibly so to speak (compare words like *dis*miss, *un*do, *de*bunk, which have overt marks of the negative) is to present the not-doing – the refraining from action or the negation of it – as though it were a positive action.

If we wish to ask why these transformations have been used, the essential starting point is simply to describe the processes that have taken place, as we have done. To summarize, in these processes a series of complex actions are collapsed into surface forms which make them seem extremely simple, and refraining from action is portrayed as though it was taking positive action. We can be specific about the processes and about the effect, so that we are on firmer ground in hypothesizing about motives and functions in particular uses of these forms. The miners' withdrawal of their labour is presented as the only direct unqualified action in the

editorial. Responsibility rests firmly on their shoulders. That is offered as the only uncomplicated fact in an otherwise complex situation. Note, however, that it is the syntactic form only which makes this claim. The writer is well aware of this, as we can see from the opening sentences:

1. The three-day week for industry is extremely hurtful.
3. It [a sudden blackout] can kill people.

There is a contrast between the relative damage resulting from the two actions, the government-imposed three-day week and the union-caused blackout. Though strictly and syntactically the unions do not appear as actors in relation to *kill*, we know that blackouts do not just happen but are caused. We are forced to search for the real causer of *kill*, the real antecedent of *it*. And here the deletion of actors in the nominalization *blackout* is useful, because while we can substitute *miners* the writer of the editorial is protected from involvement by the transformations he has applied. His position is not all that unlike the wife's strategy in the face of the husband's assumed anger.

Processes other than transactives concerned with physical processes occur in the editorial. We have mentioned verbs of saying, thinking, etc.: *Mr. Len Murray, speaking yesterday*; *He called it . . .*; *The Government has been much criticized*; *the three-day week was announced*. Most of these are in the passive form. Instead of *Someone criticized the Government* we have *The Government has been criticized*. The number of passives in the editorial is astonishingly high, and the majority of them are agentless passives (this is true for many texts in English). There is one common feature of nominalizations and agentless passives, namely the deletion of the actor. As with nominalizations, we realize in most cases that the actor has been deleted, but also as with nominalizations we cannot always be certain of the specific identity of the deleted actor. So in the sentence *It should not be forgotten . . .* we know well enough that this is an injunction to some psychological actor not to forget: but who is he or she? The reader of the *Guardian*? The Government? The leader writer? The miners? All of them? Presumably it makes some difference. If one is negotiating pay claims these are things to be very specific about. No doubt different readers supply the actor of their choice. In some passives the deleted actor seems very easily recoverable: *essential maintenance in the pits is done on overtime*. Here the deleted agents are obviously those people who do essential maintenance. But the effect of the deletion is to take these people entirely for granted and to eliminate them from the printed text. This is not a trivial omission, since one of the miners' main

grievances was the fact that actual men have to do this work, going down the mines in unpleasant conditions, during weekends and outside normal hours. The 'economy' of not mentioning these agents has the further effect of suppressing their existence. It takes a stand on the issue being described. The construction *essential maintenance* allows us to point to another significant function of nominalizations – it provides a noun, to which a judgmental adjective can be attached. In the underlying form *essential* would have to be attached to a specific word, *essential machinery, essential safety checks*, or else the writer would have to reveal who judges this to be essential – *the Coal Board regards it as essential that* . . . But in this surface form the judge may remain anonymous, and a subjective assessment is presented as an integral part of the objective content. The affinities between this process and those so far discussed are not too difficult to see.

It is time to summarize some of the changes which are involved in the passive transformation (including one or two which we have not, so far, discussed) and point to the effects of these linguistic processes. Directly following this we summarize the processes involved in the other transformations and their effects.

Linguistic changes	Effects
1. *The passive transformation*	
(a) It inverts the order of actor and *affected*, e.g.: *The opposition accused the government.* ⟷ *The government was accused by the opposition.*	The theme of the sentence (what it is about) changes from actor to affected.
(b) The *actor* is no longer directly attached to the verb, but instead is linked by a preposition, *by*.	The link between actor and process is weakened, that is, the causal connection is syntactically looser.
(c) The verb *to be* is introduced, and the main verb changed from an actual process to a finished process.	The process, because it is completed, becomes more like an adjective, a state.
(d) The *actor* may be deleted: *The government was accused by the opposition.* *The government was accused* ——	The cause of the process is deleted, and it may be difficult or impossible to recover.

Linguistic changes	Effects
(e) The surface structure now has a strong affinity with a *noun-'is'-adjective* construction. That is, from *transactive* it has changed to the surface form of *attributive*.	Causality is no longer the main concern, but instead attribution or classification is. The change from verbal process to quality or state is complete.
2. *The nominalization transformation*	
(a) It deletes one or more of the participants in the whole model: *Workers picket a factory.* ↓ ↓ —— *picketing* —— *Someone delivers coal.* *coal deliveries* ——	Interest shifts from the participants and causers of the process to the process (made nominal), and in some cases to the affected participant. Even where the deletion is noted, the specific identity of the participant may be irrecoverable.
(b) A new noun is formed.	The change from *verb* to *noun* entails a range of meanings: process → state; activity → object; specific → general; concrete → abstract.
(c) Nominalizations are not marked for tense, so they are outside indications of time or modality (see chapter 5).	Speakers can avoid some of the classificatory acts—indicating when, how likely, etc., which are obligatory with verbs.
(d) Complex relations are collapsed into single entities.	Simplicity can be asserted where in reality complexity is the case.
(e) The new nominals can function as participants in new constructions: *Picketing* curtailed *coal production.*	This further increases the opacity of the nominals; once they function as actors, affected, etc., we are less likely to attempt to interpret. Also, simple causes can be posited where complex causes are the case.
(f) The new nominals may become stable entities, new nouns in the dictionary.	The perceptual and cognitive inventory of the language and therefore of the language user has been altered.

Linguistic changes	Effects
3. *Negative incorporation*	
(a) The negative particle is 'taken into' the form of the word, which is (becomes) a single unit.	The word is perceived as a single unit; the negation of an action is seen as the taking of positive action.
(b) The word can appear in active-passive transformations: *The miners ban overtime. Overtime is banned by the miners.* (Note that words with overt negation cannot appear in actives: *He was unknown* ⇐ *They unknew him.*)	As above; but note the restriction on verbs with overtly expressed negation. This shows that the refraining from action, when openly expressed, cannot appear as a positive action; though it can appear as an attribute (in the passive form) of the affected noun.

All the processes mentioned here work to obscure the originally chosen models; deletion, simplification, collapsing of forms into single units, all act to alter the way in which a reader meets the material and tend to structure his interpretations in specific ways. He is continually coerced into taking the surface form as the real form; and that surface is a radically transformed version of the originally chosen linguistic form.

It should be stressed that what we have seen in this passage from the *Guardian* is not simply bias against the miners. There does seem to be that: but the prevailing syntactic forms are typical for leader articles in this paper. Relationals are the rule, and transformations tend to be into this preferred model. It is of the nature of this model that it allows only a limited realization of transparent causal processes. The result inevitably is mystification of these processes. There would be mystification even if the *Guardian* was crusading on behalf of the miners (or, more plausibly, arguing guardedly that their case was on the whole a strong one). The processes of classifying are carried on at a high level, with classifications weighed against each other in a complex, multifaceted judgment. This is a paper for top people. But the higher the level at which this activity is carried on, the greater is the mystification of real, physical processes, of large- or small-scale causal sequences. So a miner might not understand this judgment in all its complexity: but the reader of the *Guardian* wouldn't be helped by this editorial to understand mining, or the physical and economic context of the whole dispute.

(ii) Some transformations of normal science; or, a brief essay in the sociology of knowledge

Perhaps it is not surprising to find ideological slanting in a newspaper editorial, even with so reputable and independent a paper as the *Guardian*. It's interesting, however, that the language used by scientists is also heavily transformed. To take an example that will be familiar to linguists, here is the opening of Chomsky's epoch-making *Syntactic Structures* (1957).

> Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages. Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis (p. 11).

The language here is exemplarily 'scientific': neutral, objective, impersonal. It is also – a necessary price for these virtues – extremely vague about key elements in most of the processes at issue. Active transactives are the most transparent form in which to represent causal processes. In this passage there are no unmodified transactives. Only seven sentences later does Chomsky venture on his first active transactional. This is a paradox worth exploring further: an apparent contradiction between the linguistic forms of scientific objectivity and the natural form of scientific theories.

In this passage Chomsky uses three passives:

1. the principles and processes by which *sentences are constructed* in particular languages
2. syntactic investigation of *a given language*
3. *a grammar that can be viewed* as a device

In each case the actor has been deleted. In each case it is extremely difficult to recover the actor precisely, more difficult than was the case with the *Guardian*. Example (1) shows this clearly. There is a *by* form, as though these *principles and processes* are the actors. But these principles do not do the constructing. Their relationship to the process would be more precisely given by 'through' or 'in terms of', that is, the *by* phrase is more like an instrument than an actor. As it stands we might assume that (1) is derived from an underlying sentence such as

4. The principles and processes construct sentences in particular languages.

But this is a very peculiar sentence, probably so peculiar as to be ungrammatical. If we go back further in trying to interpret it we might suggest

Speakers construct sentences according to principles and processes

and

That speakers construct sentences according to principles is itself a process.

This would be prefaced by an analysis of *Syntax is the study* . . . , which might be

Syntax is the name for how someone studies the principles according to which people construct sentences and the processes which result.

This may not be how others interpret the sentence. The point is that its interpretation is extremely difficult. If we regard sentence 4 as grammatical, then all human actors have been irrecoverably lost. If we try to account for human actors, we have to go to something like the extended paraphrase above, but it is difficult to see what transformations could change these back to the surface we have got. It ought to be impossible to conjoin *principles and processes* as subjects of *construct* (as in the active above), though they can be conjoined as objects of study.

In phrase 2, *given* derives from an underlying form X *gives* Y *to* Z. Here Y is the *language*, but who is understood to give this language to whom? Z presumably stands for the individual linguist who undertakes to investigate the language, but X, the giver, is unknown. This is an important omission in any sociology of knowledge. Who determines the subject matter for the investigation? Is it the person or group who determines the goals? *Given* here is moved into an attributive position, *a given language*, so that this question obtrudes less than it would if the fuller passive form was used: *a language that is given*. In phrase 3 there is a similar uncertainty about *can be viewed*. Who can view it like this? Others? Or the constructor of the theory? Again, substantial issues about the scope of theories and how that scope is defined, about the status of the investigator, and about objectivity, are involved.

But, as with the *Guardian* passage, nominalizations are more common, for instance,

Syntax is *the study* of the principles and processes
syntactic investigation of a given language
the construction of a grammar

As often with nominalizations, the actor is deleted. In each of these cases the actor is the linguist, who studies principles, investigates language, and constructs a grammar. He is easily recoverable, though he is probably not the same linguist in each case, but a standard average linguist. Even so, the surface forms have slightly strange characteristics. In *syntax is the study* the object of an action is equated with the action itself. In the next example the action in its nominalized form 'has' a goal, strictly the goal of its actor, as we would presumably interpret it. We seem to have a rule here whereby the actor is deleted, and the nominalized action replaces him as subject of a clause which is about possession, *X has Y*. The effect is to displace the goal from the human actor onto the action itself, irrespective of who performs it. Although the utterance is interpreted as the result of a transformation, it also affects a reader through its surface form. The surface presents a world without people, where no one thinks or speaks but language is produced, where no one studies or investigates, but investigation proceeds unerringly to its goal. It may be that this language is harder to read if it is taken seriously, that is, if we attempt to relate it back to precise statements of processes in deep structure. It may well be that scientific language is not meant to be read other than superficially. Everyone who has tried to teach Chomsky to the uncommitted must know the sense of difficulty they experience. Perhaps facility in reading language of this sort comes from an agreement to read the surface as though it were an untransformed realization of the underlying structure – as we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter; and part of learning to be a scientist is precisely about this. It does involve accepting an unreal world where principles construct sentences, where investigations have goals, and sincerity might well play golf.

This phenomenon can be accounted for illuminatingly using Kuhn's (1962) influential account of how scientific theories relate to a particular community of scientists. During a period of what Kuhn calls 'normal science' scientists accept a 'paradigm', a common body of assumptions, methods, problems, and subject matter, which organizes their activities as members of the community, but remains implicit. He distinguishes periods of normal science from scientific revolutions, when radical innovations grow out of crisis, usually as the result of the achievement of one or two outstanding individuals. But revolutions are rare. Most scientific activity is 'normal science', in which a professional community is united by common assumptions, goals, and tasks, which would seem incomprehensible or trivial to the intelligent layman, who is excluded from the community by his incomprehension.

In some respects Chomsky seems to be writing the syntax of normal science. The language is opaque to laymen, setting up a barrier around the privileged knowledge of the community of specialists. The use of *given* shows exactly the vagueness to be expected of a normal scientist, who passively accepts definitions of goals and tasks from an ill-defined or unknown source, the community of scientists, or the 'paradigm'. The idea that the *investigation* can have a *goal* independent of the investigator also reflects the controlling assumptions of the paradigm in normal science. The elimination of the speaker could also be seen as a paradigm-assumption for linguistics at the time Chomsky was writing.

The interesting thing about all this is that Chomsky was not a 'normal scientist'. He was a radical innovator, and these sentences were the opening of his most innovative work. As students of the so-called Chomskyan revolution will know, in this passage the new orientation is already signalled in the second part of the second sentence:

> Syntactic investigation of a given language has as its goal the construction of a grammar that can be viewed as a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis.

Chomsky in fact wanted to opt out of the contract implied by *given* and to take a universalist position, in terms of which he would in practice be able to work largely through an analysis of his own language. This exploits the vagueness of *given* because Chomsky can retain the same formulae, use apparently the same models for the structure of knowledge as his community, but reinterpret its key elements. Another Chomskyan departure was his notion of generative grammar. In this passage, the idea of a grammar as a 'device for producing sentences' was not at all what the normal linguist would have accepted as an account of grammars. The syntax of this is interesting in two ways. The proposition is prefaced by *can be viewed*. Here the modal *can* makes the deleted agent even more difficult to specify. The sentence is ambiguous between *the construction of a grammar that can then [if the linguist wants] be viewed as a device* (where *can=is possible*) and *the construction of a grammar whose property is that it can be viewed as a device* (where *can=is allowed*). In the first case, the viewer is not a 'normal' linguist, but would be tolerated by normal linguists, since he is carrying out a possible secondary task, reflecting on the task that normal linguists perform. In the second, the generative grammarian is also the constructor of the theory: the precise form of the goal of syntactic investigation is *his* goal. In the second interpretation,

the Chomskyan revolution has already happened; in the first it is not a revolution, but a new way of looking at what linguists have always done. So the same sentence has two meanings in relation to successive paradigms. It has the form of the normal science of both stages (and it will be basically the same individuals who will subscribe to these different paradigms). The ambiguity is no doubt a consequence of Chomsky's uncertain position. He is appealing to his community for a hearing at least, while undermining the foundations of their paradigm. The mystification inherent in the passive transformation allows him to sustain this ambiguous role. He can exploit the mystification his community is habituated to for his own purposes; though this does not mean that he need be aware of what he is doing, a clear-sighted manipulator of his naive 'normal' colleagues. His use of the forms of language of his community (which exclude the 'intelligent layman' or any other source of popular support) shows his tacit acceptance of that community as sole arbitrator.

The phrase that most clearly contains Chomsky's new conception of the goals of grammar is *a device of some sort for producing the sentences of the language under analysis*. This is, significantly, close to a surface transactional. However, it too contains a crucial uncertainty. The form 'an X for —ing Y' has two alternative deep structures. For example, *a power saw for cutting wood* may be derived from either (a) *a power saw with which men cut wood* or (b) *a power saw which cuts wood*. Similarly, *a device for producing sentences* can derive from either (a) *a device by means of which speakers produce sentences* or (b) *a device which produces sentences*. The second seems to envisage a machine-grammar which produces sentences. In the first, the conception of the task unequivocally includes speakers. This is the same uncertainty as we noted in the opening *principles and processes*. The difference between the two structures is of the utmost importance, for this is a central proposition of the new paradigm; and a difference as large as this might be held to constitute a difference in paradigms. The transformation allows Chomsky to proceed without resolving his uncertainty, and without acknowledging it. The strategy is supported by non-transformational means too. We shall look at these later: for instance, the modal verb *can* and the vague *of some sort*, which add no cognitive content to the phrase but have a modal force, diffusing a convenient imprecision over the whole phrase. But transformations are the main means whereby Chomsky can render his meanings and uncertainties opaque to the normal linguist and perhaps even to the revolutionary linguist himself. Under this cover he can reshape his paradigm.

(iii) Functions of transformations

We can now present some observations arising out of these analyses in a more systematic and general form. Our use of the concept of transformation differs, in part, significantly and controversially from general transformational theory. Our departure from the generally accepted theory is shown in italics.

1. The interpretation of utterances entails reconstructing their derivation. *The interpretation which a hearer makes may or may not coincide with the underlying structure which the speaker had in mind.*
2. Of the linguistic operations that occur in the derivation of an utterance, it is useful to distinguish a special set which characteristically do not add new material or new elements to the deep structure. We have been calling these operations 'transformations', taking over the term from Chomsky. Transformations in this sense delete, join, or reorder elements which are present in underlying structures.
3. *In our use, transformations may transform one model into the form of another, or collapse models into single syntactic elements.*
4. *The relation between transformed structures and their pre-transformed form is an equivocal one. The transformed structure differs in significant ways from the underlying structure* (though it may not be interpreted by a hearer as different), *yet it will be interpreted in part or whole as 'meaning' the same.* So the relationship is one of simultaneous identity *and disjunction.* Ideally the identity is prominent, and the underlying pre-transformed structure directly recoverable, as is the case with the expanded passive form. *But typically the surface form has a partly autonomous significance, and the full interpretation of transformed utterances is normally an unstable, perhaps idiosyncratic, resolution of the different levels of interpretation. That is, interpretation probably involves a kind of double vision, whereby the underlying structures are both seen and not seen, or 'seen' and not heard.*
5. *Transformations always involve suppression and/or distortion,* but they are also normally reversible. *The standard that acts as the measure of what has been suppressed or distorted is given by the underlying structures uncovered by reversing transformations.* The 'relevant truth' which acts as a standard then is given by full propositions *in the form of basic models.*

6. *The typical function of transformations is distortion and mystification, through the characteristic disjunction between surface form and implicit meanings. Since it is usually a help in reversing transformations to know the content independently, transformations can act as a code, fully interpretable only by initiates, safeguarding their privileged knowledge.*
   But transformations can also create the illusion of such knowledge for both hearer and speaker, masking contradictions or confusions, and imposing an unexamined consensus.

(iv) Sources and context

Our discussion draws substantially on general linguistic theory but departs from it in some fundamental ways. We wish to give a brief indication of reference points in the field with some context supplied. Our main concern here is to provide non-linguist readers with a minimal though helpful set of references which they might use both to place our theory in relation to current work and to read into the field at certain points. Some of the references we give are readily available. Others will require the reader to refer to a reasonably good linguistics library.

Our use of transformations derives initially from Chomsky. The important works here are *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). Chomsky wavered between adopting a 'realist' position on syntax (which assumes that linguistic processes and forms correspond to some psychological reality) and a non-realist position (that is, one which assumes that the constructs of a theory of language are merely formal and have no 'real' connection with the mind, but serve only to allow us to describe linguistic forms satisfactorily). We take a strongly realist position and regard all transformational analyses as hypothetical reconstructions of psychologically real processes. For a discussion of psycholinguistic experiments which took a similar line see Judith Greene's *Psycholinguistics* (1972). A more up-to-date and advanced book is Fodor, Bever and Garrett (1974). In a recent paper, 'Towards a realistic model of transformational grammar', Joan Bresnan (1977) argues that, while Chomsky's 1965 theory could not stand up to the demands of a realist interpretation, the current theory used by him and his co-workers, the lexicalist–interpretative theory, is adequate to such an interpretation. Our own position is somewhat more fully argued in Hodge and Kress (1974). Chomsky took the notion of transformations over from his teacher Zellig Harris. The latter had seen these as relations between sentences in actual discourse, so

that, if the sentence *The police shot 200 Africans* occurred in one part of a text, it was transformationally related to *the shooting of the Africans* in the same text at another place. We accept Harris's use, which is compatible with the view that transformations are psychologically real. The background to the development of this key linguistic term is given in Kress and Trew (1978).

Three particular transformations we discuss have been extensively studied. On nominalizations there are two basic positions. One assumes that phrases such as *John's beliefs* come into existence as a result of transformations from full sentential forms, which is the position we adopt. This was first argued by R.B. Lees (1960). The other assumes that they are not derived in this way. A fairly full discussion of this issue can be found in Chomsky's 'Remarks on nominalization' (1970). In our discussion of verbs which contain negatives, we draw on work in semantics known as componential analysis. A ready initial reference to this can be found in J. Lyons's *New Horizons in Linguistics* (1970), in the essay by Manfred Bierwisch, 'Semantics'. This theory has been influential in a branch of transformational generative grammar known as 'generative semantics'. Some articles on this theory appear in *Readings in English Transformational Grammar* (Jacobs and Rosenbaum, 1970) (those by Lakoff, Ross, and McCawley). An easier introduction is George Lakoff's (1970) *Irregularity in Syntax*. The treatment of passives is discussed in Chomsky (1957 and 1965); for a more recent treatment see Akmajian and Heny (1975), which incidentally is a very good comprehensive introduction to recent transformational theory within the Chomskyan group. Halliday (1967/68) discusses the function of the passive in relation to the distribution of 'theme' and 'information focus' and actor and affected.

Our analysis of newspaper language in this chapter was necessarily brief and specific. A more extended discussion, bringing out the relation of language and ideology, can be found in Tony Trew's 'Theory at work' (1978) and in Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew (1979).

As far as our use of the concept of transformation goes, we do not draw on work in transformational theory after about 1969. Chomsky's (1971) paper 'Deep structure, surface structure and semantic interpretation' marked a departure from the *Aspects* theory towards a theory known as 'interpretive semantics'. From here Chomsky and his immediate group have moved towards a more surfacelike form of the grammar, with very few transformations, and anything that looks at all semantic banned from the grammar. Two journals represent this strand of transformational work, *Linguistic Inquiry* and *Linguistic Analysis*. Interestingly, in this work

the questions of functional motivations for transformations and psychological reality are taken up again (see the reference to Joan Bresnan's paper above). The 'generative semantics' strand of transformational theory has moved into areas which are of interest to our theory, in particular an increasing concern with the pragmatics of language. We refer to these at the end of the relevant chapters. However, as far as the concept of transformation itself is concerned, we make no use of the changes within this work. One development from generative semantics, 'relational grammar', has in fact abandoned the concept of transformation. We refer to this briefly at the end of chapter 3. The publications of the *Chicago Linguistics Circle* contain much of the relvant work in this area. A recently published reader in relational grammar is edited by Cole and Sadock (1977), *Syntax and Semantics, vol. 8: Grammatical Relations.*