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THEORIES OF NARRATIVE IN TEXTLINGUISTICS

MUSEFANGEREN (THE MOUSE CATCHER)

En Præst havde faaet sig en ny Aviskarl. Han havde sat ham til at tærsk. *A parson had got a new groom. He had set him to thresh.* Men som han sad i sit Studerekammer, saa faldt det ham ind at lytte efter. *But as he was sitting in his study, it occurred to him to listen,* og om han hørte Plejlen gaa paa Loen. Nej det var ganske stille. *if he heard the flail go on the threshing floor. No, it was absolutely quiet.*

Han maatte da ud og se, hvad Karlen tog sig til. Han kommer til Loen, *He then had to go out and see what the groom was doing. He comes to the barn,*

stikker Hovedet ind og ser god Karl ligge paa Maven i Halmen, saa lang *puts his head in at the door, and sees the good groom lying on the floor.* han var. "Hvad bestiller du der? spurgte Præsten. "Tys, Far!" sagde Karl. *"What are you doing?" asked the parson. "Hush, Father", said the groom,* "jeg lurer paa Musen. "Da blev Præsten glad og syntes, det var en *I lie in wait for the mouse". Then the parson was pleased and thought* pragtlig Karl, han havde faaet, som ogsaa kunde fange Mus. "Det var ret *that he had got a splendid groom who could catch mice. "It is well done Per!"* Per", hviskede Præsten; "hvor mange har du fanget?" - "Naar jeg faar een *Per", whispered the parson; "How many have you caught?" - "When I get one more* the parson *whispered; "How many have you caught?" - "When I get one more* til den, jeg lurer paa, saa har jeg to," sagde Per. "Det er godt," *to the one I am lying in wait for, I have got two," Per said. "That's* skede Præsten, og saa listede han ganske forsigtigt op i Studerekam- *good", whispered the parson, and then he walked very softly up to his* ret igen.

*study again.*

A. It has been the aim of many writers to construct a grammar of the structure of the text in analogy with a grammar of the structure of the sentence. Especially in the field of folk tale analysis progress has been made e.g. by Propp, Bremond, Todorov. A more linguistic approach is made by Teun A. van Dijk and David E. Rumelhart. I shall not try here to give a survey of the works and theories about narratives, I can only refer to the treatments in E. Gillich & W. Raible (1977) and Jens Bertelsen et al. (1974).

B. As a start I will point out that there are some stipulations about narratives which are made in the most different approaches, viz. that texts consist of functions, ordered hierarchially by recursive rules which are substantially universal.

1. The different theories have as a basic assumption that all (narrative) texts consist of parts, often called functions (hereafter marked by capital letters). A function is defined as a segment determined by the relation to some other segment. In the example text, Musefangeren, the following is a function:

(1) Han maatte ud og se, hvad Karlen tog sig til.

It is identified as a WISH in relation to the following ACT. A function can include several sentences:

(2) ... saa faldt det ham ind at lytte efter, om han hørte Plej-len gaa paa loen. Nej, det var ganske stille. Han maatte da ud og se, hvad Karlen tog sig til. Han kommer til loen, stikker Hovedet ind og ser god Karl liggende paa Maveen i Halmen, saa lang han var.

This function can be identified as SUSPICION in relation to the MISLEADING which follows.

2. The second basic assumption in narrative theory is that functions are ordered hierarchially. (1) is a constituent of (2), and (2) is a constituent of the middle part of the whole text.

From these two basic assumptions it follows that texts can be described as a generative system of rewriting rules. The authors mentioned do not use this formalisation, but their descriptions will be "translated" into such a formalisation and in this way compared (and the analogy with sentence grammar becomes obvious).

(3) The third assumption in textgrammars of narrative is that some of the rewriting rules are recursive, i.e. can be used on their own output. (1) as part of (2) is the result of a recursive rule. Thus (2) is generated by the rule (3) (where  $\bar{\phantom{x}}$  designates, consists of, and  $A+B$  designates that A precedes B):

(3) EPISODE: EVENTUALITY + ACTUALISATION + COMPLETION  
ACTUALISATION: EPISODE

The SUSPICION is seen as an instance of EVENTUALITY, and MISLEADING as ACTUALISATION. However (1) too, may be generated by rule (3). The WISH is a kind of EVENTUALITY, and the ACT an ACTUALISATION. Recursivity is a device in the grammar to account for the creative aspect of text production. It makes it possible by a limited number of rules to generate an unlimited number of texts.

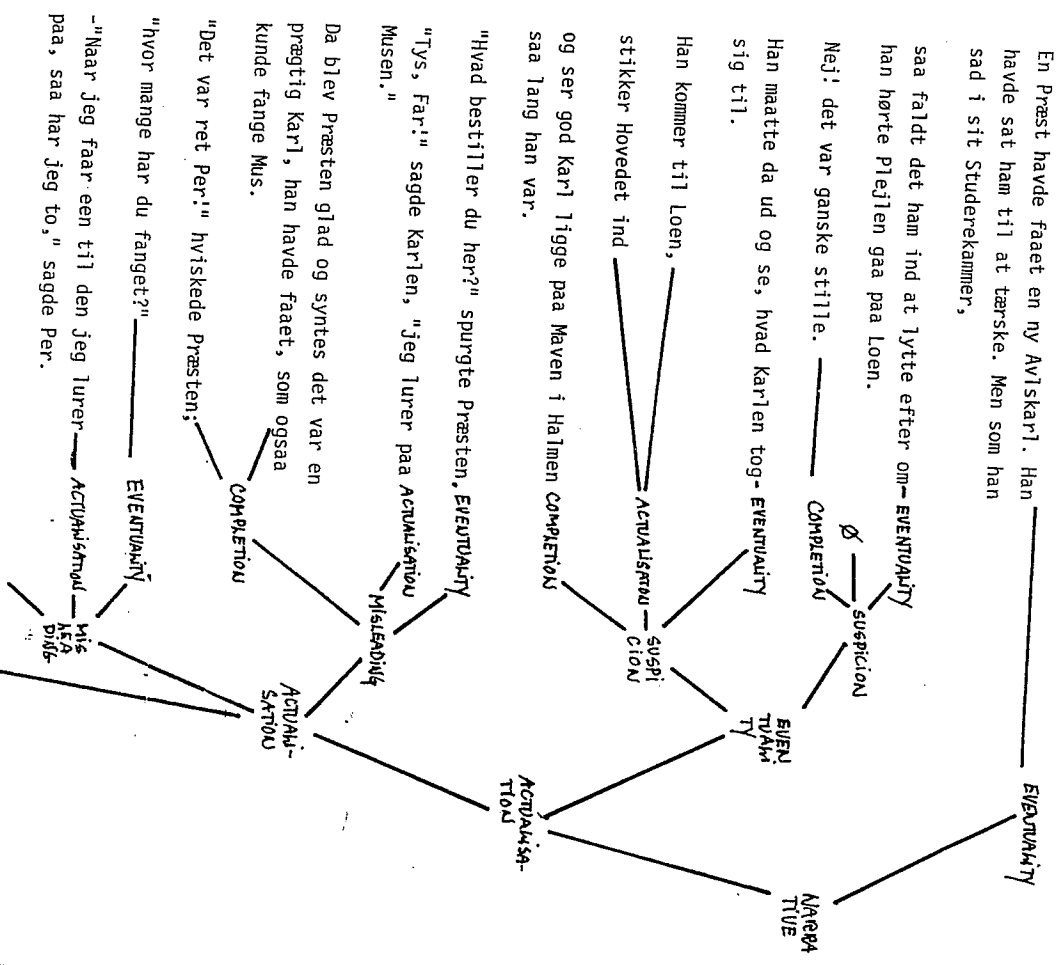
4. Whereas the three basic assumptions in textgrammars mentioned above are formal universals, this fourth assumption has to do with substantial universals. Several textgrammarians claim that substantive rule in textgrammars may be universal too, that there is a universal logic of narratives and that it is possible to state universal rules about a set of functions that a narrative must consist of. Various authors make various proposals in this area and it is not possible here to mention them all, but I shall refer to Bremond (1973) and Rumelhart (1975) as examples.

Bremond has as his most general rule one that can be formulated as (3). He then proposes various specifications of the rule  $\bar{\phantom{x}}$ . ACTUALISATION can be exemplified by a predication with a PATIENT: MODIFICATION (of the STATE of the PATIENT) or INFORMATION (of the PATIENT), or it may be exemplified by a predication with an AGENT: an ACT. An ACTUALISATION may or may not take place, e.g. the difference between an ACT and an OMISSION it may be positive or negative, e.g. a MODIFICATION can be an AMELIORATION or a DETERIORATION (Bremond, 1973 ch.2). This example of some of Bremond's universals can be formulated as (4):

(4) ACTUALISATION: { MODIFICATION/INFORMATION/ACT  
TAKES PLACE/ DOES NOT TAKE PLACE  
POSITIVE/NEGATIVE

(/ means either...or, { means to be specified both as... and as ... The rules then give 3 times 2 times 2 possible specifications).

According to the rules (3) and (4) Musefangeren can be analysed as follows: (The analysis is illustrated by a tree diagram laid down so that the smallest segments of the text are written in succession under each other to the extreme left, the names of the functions they exemplify to the right of the segments, and hierarchially higher functions to the right again. In this way it is possible to make diagrams of entire texts.)

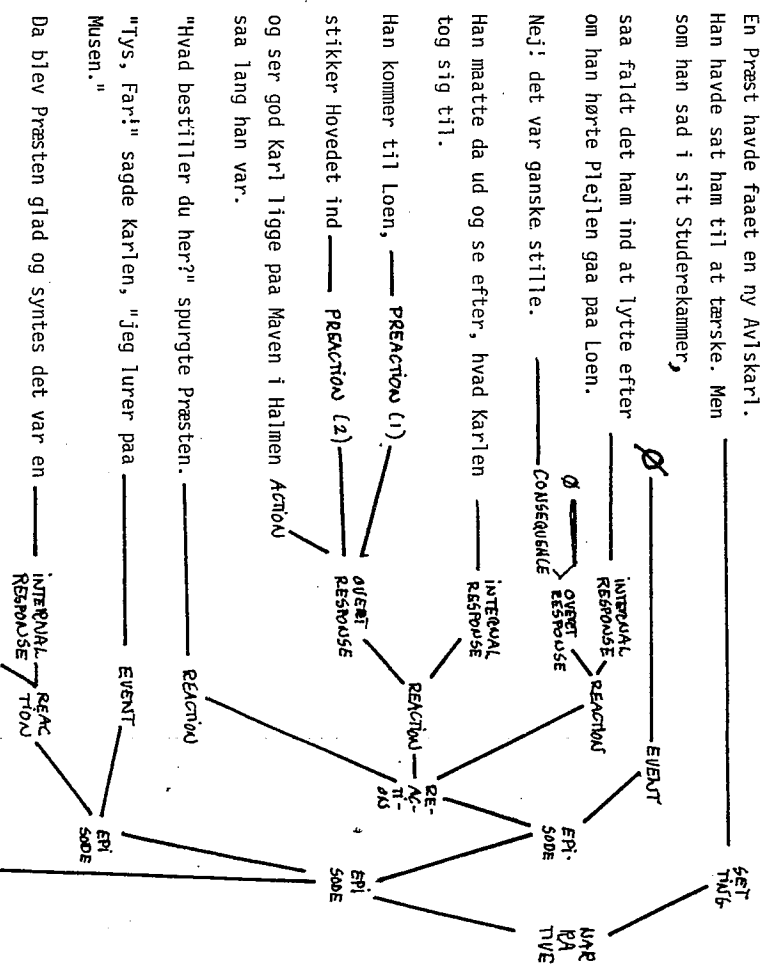


"Det er godt," hviskede Præsten, og saa listede han ganske forsigtigt op paa Studerekammeret igen.

For another example of substantially universal rules I refer to Rumløhart's (1975) grammar which can be formulated:

- (6) NARRATIVE: SETTING + EPISODE
- SETTING: STATE
- EPISODE: EVENT + REACTION
- REACTION: INTERNAL RESPONSE + OVERT RESPONSE
- OVERT RESPONSE: REACTION + ACTION + CONSEQUENCE

Following this, Musefangeren is analysed:



prægtig Karl, han havde faaet, som \_\_\_\_\_ ogsaa kunde fange Mus.

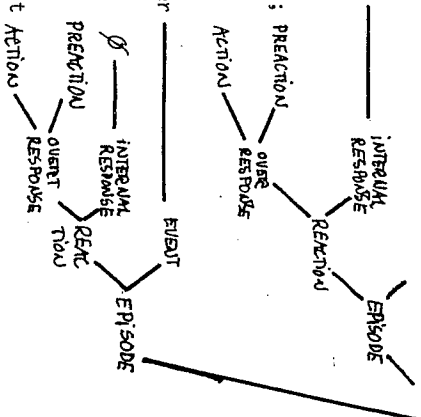
"Det var ret Per." hviskede Præsten;

"hvor mange har du fanget?"

"Naar jeg faar en til den jeg lurer paa, saa har jeg to," sagde Per.

"Det er godt," hviskede Præsten,

og saa lustedede han ganske forsigtigt op paa Studerekammeret igen.



The analysis of the text using the grammar (3-4) differs from the analysis using (6). Nevertheless, both authors assume that their grammar is universal.

The rest of this article deals with the problem of the status of such universal rules.

C. What is the object of a universal rule? In my opinion the rules (3-4) describe two different things. First, they describe the pragmatic rules as to how to compose a text with respect to the information structure of the listener. Secondly, they deal with the problem how to describe human action across time, i.e. which possibilities of describing actions are offered by language as a system. On the other hand they do not deal with how it is possible for human beings to make actions or the like.

In our culture the pragmatic rules are as old as the rhetoric. Aristotle explained why texts often consist of three parts (and not two). The speaker has to give the information presupposed by the other parts, e.g. information about time, place, and persons. A text needs an ending to show that the narrative is finished, and it is often a summary, a conclusion, an explanation or a moral. These types of endings, then, presuppose the middle part without themselves being presupposed by anything. (Aristoteles 1975 p.39).

Such relations which determine and define the pragmatic rules in text composition, may then be identified as presuppositions in the linguistic sense of the term. The middle part of the text presupposes the

the introduction and the end presupposes the middle.

Greimas (1970 p.174) specifies the presuppositional relations in a narrative. The semantic deep structure in a narrative text is a semantic opposition. In Musefangeren the deep semantic oppositions can be stated as: control versus disobedience and knowledge versus delusion. A narrative then displays the opposition across time in 3 parts. In the introduction a state of opposite interests is presented: the parson has the control, but the possibility of disobedience exists. In the middle part one of the opposite interests is dominating the other. Suspicion (and one of the opposite knowledge) is dominated by misleading and therefore delusion. In the end a value is attributed to the person expressing one side in the opposition: the parson is misled although he has control, disobedience is dominating. This little narrative displays the relation between control and mind, it shows how the suppressed by knowing more about the suppressors' ways of thinking than vice versa can avoid the suppression.

These rules of text grammar which I have called pragmatic are in a way universal. There are exceptions, but what presents a worse problem is that the rules are too general to be falsified - and thereby verified. In a description of the narrative Musefangeren as I have sketched above, the point which should have been shown, is taken for granted, viz. that the story is to be understood the way I did it. As far as I know, no procedure exists to secure that a segment is understood as an instance of one function rather than as another.

D. In the diagrams the pragmatic rules mentioned are shown to be the first (extreme right, topmost) rules, while the semantic rules are later (extreme left, bottommost) rules. Often the problem of the semantic rules is stated as dealing with the name and the character of the function. E.g. Bremond distinguishes between states that can be modified and states of mind that can be changed by information or misleading. Rumelhart distinguishes between internal and overt response.

The classification of functions could be based on a description of the material of the function, e.g. the distinction internal vs. overt response could be based on Fillmore's distinction between dative and agentive.

It is not done, but I think it is possible to a certain degree. The characteristics of the narrative depends on the verbs used, viz. verbs

of change (the terminology in this field is confusing, but I am referring to the grammatical category often called dynamic, perfective, terminative). Any narrative must have a verb of change in the central part which presupposes an earlier state and implies a later state. As an example the verbs *spurgte* and *hviskede* are verbs of change, and *sad* is a state-verb.

On the other hand, it is not possible in all cases to characterize any segment on the basis of the material alone. Bremond characterizes (8) as ACTUALISATION, and as part of MISLEADING, and Rumelhart describes (9) as an EVENT.

(8) "Tys, Far!" sagde Karlen, "jeg lurser paa Mosen."

It can be seen that the function of (8) is determined not by the material but by the relations to the other functions. In Bremond's description (8) as an ACTUALISATION presupposes an EVENTUALITY (the question from the parson), and causes his delusion.

In Rumelhart's description the EVENT initiates the later REACTION of the parson. The difference between the two descriptions has to do with which relations are allowed between functions.

The concept of relation between functions is formulated explicitly by van Dijk (1977) and Rumelhart. Here we find such relations as is a presupposition of causes, initiates. The relations are often expressed by conjunctions or adverbials (sentence-adverbials), but sometimes they are not expressed at all.

The relation is presupposition of constitutes the pragmatic rules while in narrative causation is the most important relation of the semantic kind.

E. The rules of a text grammar describing the functions and their relations such as (3-4) and (6) are not universal; on the contrary, they themselves are ideological and express a philosophy. It is easy to see that Rumelhart's rules are based on a behavioristic conception. The rules contain a stimulus response model. Human actions are seen as reactions on events, his choice of words shows this too (response) Rumelhart - I think - has got his model because his discipline is artificial intelligence, where the task is to get the computer to react as a human being in certain aspects.

Also, in Bremond's rules a philosophy is expressed, one with a long tradition. The world is seen as something in a normal state, the actions

disturb the normal state and may change it, after which it rests in peace again. It is possible to think up other conceptions as to what is normal and what is not.

The failure of the rules mentioned is that they do not describe the ideology of the texts but only their own ideology. And this is possible because of the lack of procedures to verify or make probable the assignment of a segment in the text to a function category, and because of the possibility of rewriting the functions in the generative grammar with Zero. Then any text will fit any grammar and vice versa.

What is needed is not a normative grammar, saying how to describe actions or states, but a grammar which can disclose the ideology of a text describing an action or a state.

If we compare the analysis of Musefangeren made according to Bremond's rules with the analysis of Rumelhart, we see that in the Bremond analysis the Zero manifestation of a function is not used, and the analysis reveals a symmetry which is intuitively evident: the EVENTUALITY consists of parallel SUSPICIONS (one of them more serious than the other), and the actualisation consists of parallel MISLEADINGS (one of them more serious than the other). The analysis in Rumelhart's rules misses this point, and in general the whole point of the story about control and knowledge.

It is not necessarily because Bremond's rules are better than Rumelhart's, but because the ideology of Bremond is in accordance with that in the narrative analysed. Bremond's rules can show how mind can dominate the material world of control and power, something which Rumelhart's behavioristic point of view cannot accept. The examples in Rumelhart's article are on the other hand chosen so that his rules fit, because the ideology of the text is like his own:

(9) Margie was holding tightly to the string of her beautiful new balloon. Suddenly, a gust of wind caught it. The wind carried it into a tree. The balloon hit a branch and burst. Margie cried and cried.

F. As a summary of what is said above I can say that a text grammar describes how an author can compose a text with functions and the relations between functions so that it conveys a certain ideology.

Such a grammar must describe linguistically a set of predication

types, a set of semantic relations between predications, and a set of rules stating how two or more related functions can constitute a function of higher order. I shall here sketch how such a grammar can reveal the ideology in the description of a simple action, such as signing a contract.

We need a distinction between three predication types: act description, STATE which is a predication with a state verb, and perception description, PERCEPTION which is a predication with a change verb of perception.

We operate with two relations, is presupposition of (pp) and causation (therefore). In the rules the functions are noted with capital letters, the relations with normal letters, the functions and their relations to the left of a colon, and the function of higher order as they constitute to the right of the colon. It is a sort of categorial grammar. The rule that an ACT as presupposition for another ACT, constitute an ACT is noted as (10):

(10) ACT pp ACT : ACT

In the description of the following examples I need the rules in (11):

(11) ACT pp ACT : ACT

STATE therefore ACT : ACT

PERCEPTION pp ACT : ACT

ACT therefore STATE : ACT

With a grammar of this sort it is possible to characterize the following examples:

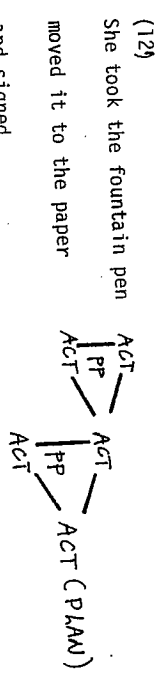
(12) She took the fountain pen, moved it to the paper and signed

(13) She seized the fountain pen, but the distance to the paper was far. Then she slowly moved it to the line on the paper, which still was white and blank. Then she signed.

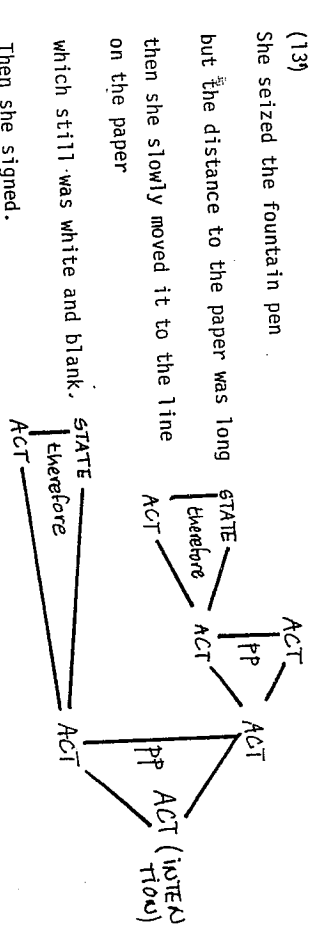
(14) She saw the pen lying on the table and seized it. When she could feel it in her hand she moved it to the paper. She saw the line where she had to sign, and then she signed.

(15) She seized the pen so that she had it in her hand. She moved it to the paper so that it was on the line, she wrote some letters and so she signed.

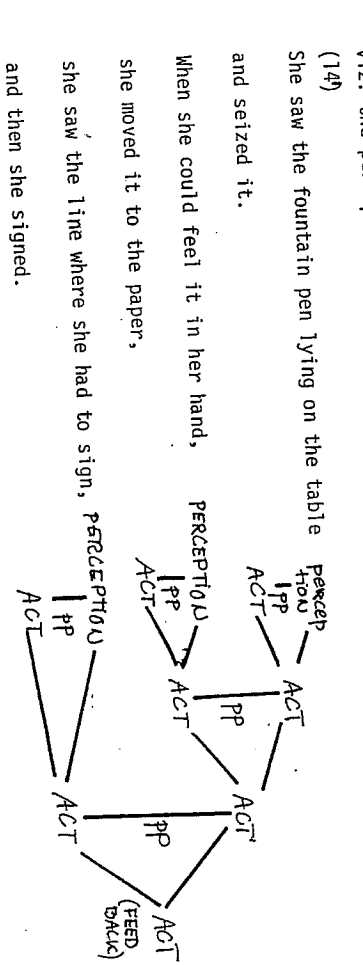
Text (12) is a description of a plan. The actor can foresee which acts she has to do for making a signing. The text deals with rational intentional action. All the texts are descriptions of plans. (12) is analyzed as:



Text (13) is a description of an intention. The actor tries to do the signing, and when obstacles show up she is making a subgoal and a subact to carry through the original act.



Text (14) is a description of how an actor is like a cybernetic system. Each act is in accordance with the original goal governed by a feedback, viz. the perception of the resultant state of the earlier act.



Text (15) is a description of how an actor changes the world with her act.

(15)

She seized the pen

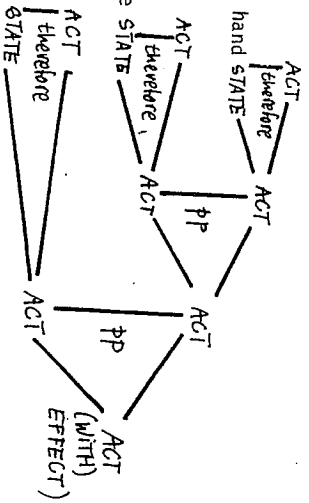
so that she had it in her hand STATE

She moved it to the paper

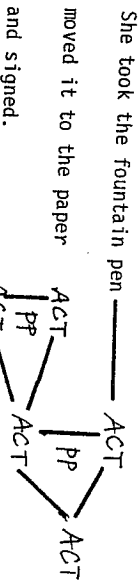
so that it was on the line STATE

She wrote some letters

and so she had signed



This is only a sketch of how the grammar works, but I shall shortly deal with the problem of how to determine that the hierarchy is as shown in (12) with left-branching (up-branching) and not with right-branching (down-branching) like in: (12'')



It depends on which of the related part of the whole is the more important, which would be the one mentioned if one had to make a shorter version of the same text. One may summarize (12) by saying: She signed, but not by saying She took the fountain pen. The function of higher order, that of signing, consists of three parts of which the last one: and signed is the most important. (In (11) I have marked the important part of a composed function by underlining). 'Signed' presupposes that the actor has put the pen to the paper, and the putting presupposes that the actor has the pen in her hand. The opposite is not true. The taking of the fountain pen is not a direct presupposition of both the moving and the signing, only of the signing.

I believe that it is possible to construct a grammar of a sort like that in (11), so that the text grammatical description is also a description of the ideology in the text. The ideology is seen as depending on

which rules are used (11 a or b or c or d) and which functions will form the top of the hierarchy. It is an open system where it is possible to add new rules if a text can not be described by the existing rules. But on the other hand I think that most of the texts may be described by something in the order of 20 rules.

As an end of this paper I will give my own proposal for an analysis of Musefangeren.

The grammar:

(16) INTENTION therefore UNDERSTANDING : UNDERSTANDING

UNDERSTANDING therefore ACT : UNDERSTANDING  
EMOTION

ACT pp EVENT : UNDERSTANDING

ACT pp PERCEPTION : UNDERSTANDING

UNDERSTANDING : COMPLICATION

UNDERSTANDING : REACTION

COMPLICATION therefore REACTION : EPISODE

STATE : INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION pp EPISODE therefore END : NARRATIVE

