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Marginal cases

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12 Marginal Cases

12.1 Body Parts as Causees

Consider first:

- (12.1) Afterwards she walked her fingers up his ribs. (BNC)
 (12.2) /.../ I found myself at the head of a stairwell, aware that yet another place might be reached but only by somersaulting over the banister and walking my feet down the opposite wall as one might descend a defile in a crag. (BNC)

In this type of construction, the functional position of the causee is taken up not by an object external to the agent's body but by his body parts. Due to the functional unity of the body and its parts, based on a unique (because organic) relationship, body parts can stand for the person (their "owner" and "manipulator"). The possibility of forming this type of construction thus attests to the functional incorporation of the body (and its parts) in the concept of 'person'.⁴² It is this functional incorporation that makes it possible to construe body parts as agents and place them in the subject position:

- (12.3) His brown legs had marched along kicking stones out of the way. (BNC)
 (12.4) They hurried across the plateau /.../, billowing out their skirts and propelling them forward on legs that ran involuntarily. (BNC)
 (12.5) "Not the usual kind of students flat," muttered the Marshal, surprised to find his feet walking on fitted carpet /.../. (BNC)

The possibility of transposing causees from the direct object position into the subject position in intransitive constructions is a feature shared also by SA constructions:

one walks one's fingers along a place → one's fingers walk along a place
 one walks one's friend/dog to a place → one's friend/dog walks to a place
 But:

⁴² On the co-referentiality of the person and his body (parts) see, e.g., Fox (1981) or Kudrnáčová (1997).

one walks the bicycle (/the letter) to a place → *the bicycle walks (/the letter walks) to a place

The similarity between the constructions under consideration and SA constructions is, as mentioned above, underlain by the organic unity of the body and its parts, which makes it possible to construe body parts as wilful instigators and controllers of the movement they perform.

It is perhaps not without interest to adduce some examples with verbs other than *walk*, *run* and *march*, namely with the verbs *drag* and *force*:

- (12.6) /.../ where Rose began to ply the heavy iron. /.../ She finished the second sleeve, began on the front. She frowned in concentration but at the same time she suddenly looked very tired, as though she should stop and sit down. The arm moving the iron dragged itself forward and back. Somebody from the village must have betrayed us, because the Germans came in the night /.../. (BNC)
- (12.7) She watched dispassionately /.../ as her father's inflexible knee forced itself to bend before the wrong prince of Wales. (BNC)

Cf. also the intransitive construction with the verb *raise* and the body parts in the subject position:

- (12.8) He clenched his teeth together but the first syllable forced itself around the corner of his mouth. His left hand raised involuntarily and, as the magical force whirled him round, began to give off octarine sparks /.../. (BNC)

Here, the adverb *involuntarily* explicitly severs the organic bond between the body part and its "manipulator" in that the source of energy triggering the movement is no longer the person but his body part. The body part is thus presented as having a primary responsibility for the movement.

12.2 On "Swimming the Baby to the Shore"

In SA constructions expressing motion situations that, on account of the semantics of the verb and the semantics of the participants, may include

inactive patients, the interpretation of the type of the involvement of the participant in the subject position and of the participant in the direct object position follows from the interpretation of the context. Consider:

- (12.9) His family are crossing a river in a small rowboat when it suddenly capsizes. Nobody could swim, but the father manages to swim the baby to shore and goes to rescue another of his sons /.../. (<http://www.abc.net.au/rollercoaster/therap/reviews/s758154.htm>)

Here, the patient (the baby) does not execute the swimming, i.e. it is totally subject to a direct physical manipulation on the part of the agent. The decisive role played by the context in determining the semantic roles of the participants can also be illustrated by way of the following example:

- (12.10) Just had one jumped over the side from us once and swamp ashore again and we caught it on the on the land again and put it away. I'm having to swim them off the steamer and tow them in a dinghy /.../. It's funny how an animal like a cow or a horse would swim you would think it would be /.../. (BNC)

Here, the causer is the instigator and controller of the motion situation and the causees are the actual executors of the motion. This sentence is thus an instantiation of a SA construction. Therefore the transitive causative construction *He swam the baby to the shore* in ex. (12.9) does not have its intransitive variant in the form *The baby swam*, as opposed to (12.10): *I swam the cattle off the steamer* – *The cattle swam off the steamer*. This issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

The decisive role played by the relevant situational context may serve as evidence in support of Langacker's (1990: 214) view that "the objective properties of a situation do not mechanically determine the grammatical organization of a sentence or finite clause describing it." Admittedly, the motion situation presented in (12.9) differs from the one in (12.10), in spite of the fact that it has the same grammatical organization. However, one apparent fact cannot be overlooked, namely, that the situation expressed in ex. (12.9) shares certain aspects of meaning with the situation in (12.10) – note that the patient in (12.9) is a living (albeit unconscious) being. The speaker chooses to use the verb *swim* (and not *take* or *bring*, e.g.) to express the fact that the patient, in spite of not executing the motion, is, in a way, actively involved in the motion. In actual fact, the construction in (12.9) is modelled after the construction in (12.10).

That is, although the patient in (12.9) may be high in prototypical patient properties, he can act as a participant that has a share in the execution of the motion. This fact posits the patient as an active (or “quasi-active”) participant, which enables us to label this participant as “the patientive causee” (cf. Shibatani and Pardeshi 2002). Consider also:

(12.11) /.../but on seeing the victim start to float face down in the water, he dived in and swam to his rescue. Mr Wasley swam the man back to the boat, and supported him until he regained consciousness. (<http://www.braveryaward.org/awards/citations/2004-2005.htm>)

(12.12) “You could tell she was in shock, so I managed to get one of her arms out the window and then her other arm out,” he said. “Then I just pulled her out through the window.” Liberty swam the woman to shore where other bystanders helped the woman onto the bank. (http://www.usadiver.com/news/libertys_rescue_11_01.htm)

On account of his animateness, the patient may be evaluated as the “allow-er” of the motion. Let me substantiate this argumentation by appealing to Waterlow’s distinction between ‘affecting’ and ‘allowing’. Waterlow (1970: 107) specifies ‘allowing’ as ‘not interfering with’. ‘Allowing’ is, thus, ‘affecting’, but passively, not actively. Consequently, if the patientive causee (in ex. 12.12) were dead, the SA construction would not be resorted to and such a situation would be rendered by means of a verb from a different semantic class – more specifically, from the class taking a totally inactive, fully-fledged patient. This is the case in the following example:

(12.13) “So we ran into the water and took the body.” “What did you do with the body?” “Carried it behind the wall /.../.” (BNC)

In the light of these facts, it can be concluded that the type of construction exemplified in ex. (12.9) shares with a SA construction two crucial aspects of meaning:

- a) the causee is animate – animateness underlies his active (or “quasi-active”) share in the execution of the motion
- b) the causee does not resist the execution of the motion carried out by the causer.

The features specified in (a) and (b) express the nature of the semantic role of the ‘allow-er’. The degree of active involvement of the patientive causee varies, depending on the character of the situation.

Needless to say, the marginality of the status of the construction in ex. (12.9) can be posited owing to the fact that the prototypical SA construction is regularly associated with a certain set of semantic features (cf. also the concept of ‘constructional meaning’, based on the idea that, roughly speaking, constructions have meaning; cf., e.g., Boas 2003, Fillmore and Atkins 1992 or Goldberg 1995). This means that the decoding of the situation expressed in “swimming the baby to the shore” rests on the decoder’s knowledge of the nature of the type of scenarios encoded in SA constructions (which involve, among other things, an active participation of the causee). That is, the sentence *He swam the baby to the shore* by itself, i.e. without being set in a certain context, carries information about the animateness of the causee, which is one of the core properties of the causees in SA constructions.

From the explication offered thus far it follows that the construction instantiated in (12.9) can be evaluated as a (marginal) sub-type of the prototypical SA construction.

In spite of the arguments justifying positing this construction as a sub-type of SA construction, it cannot be denied that, as opposed to prototypical scenarios expressed in SA constructions, the construction exemplified in (12.9) does not allow for the formation of its intransitive variant. The reason for this impossibility lies in the fact that from

(12.14) John swam the baby to the shore. (meaning “John did the swimming and the baby was with John”)

does not follow that

(12.15) The baby swam to the shore.

That is, this type of construction does not pass the entailment test for SA constructions “proper”. From

(12.16) John walked Harry to the door. (/They swam the cattle to the shore.)

it follows that

(12.17) Harry walked to the door. (/The cattle swam to the shore.)

As is evident, the reason for the failure of the entailment test rests in the causal structuration of the motion situation. In (12.9), the motion of the

patientive causee is, actually, a result of the movement carried out by the causer. That is, one cannot establish a direct causal link between John's swimming and the baby's translocation. If this were the case, it would, in theory, be possible to grasp the situation in the form "The baby's translocation was effected by means of John's swimming" (or "John swam and, in this way, brought about the baby's translocation"). The sentence *John swam the baby to the shore* can be re-worded, roughly, as "John took (/brought) the baby to the shore while swimming and while holding the baby's body."

The indirectness of the causal relation between the causer's activity and the causee's motion is the feature that differentiates between the construction under consideration and the prototypical (central) SA construction and that brings it close to the constructions of the type *John walked the bicycle up the hill*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

12.3 On "Walking the Bicycle up the Hill"

Consider first:

Type A: (12.18) John walked the bicycle up the hill. (John walked the pram around the yard.)

Type B: (12.19) John walked the letter to the post-office.

In the motion situation in (A) the motion of the object is causally linked to the motion of the agent and the object is moving as well (roughly, the agent moves and at the same time pushes the object). In the situation in (B) the motion of the object is causally linked to the motion of the agent and the object is completely inactive (the agent moves and at the same time carries the object).

As is evident, these types of construction differ from the construction discussed in the preceding chapter in one crucial respect, namely, in involving an inanimate, hence a fully-fledged patient. The animateness of the causee, underlying his agentive status, is a feature of meaning that represents one of the constitutive features of SA constructions. As has also been argued for, animateness may, in certain situations, enable the participant undergoing a change of location to assume the status of the 'patientive causee' ('the allowee'). In other words, animateness may allow this participant to have an active share in the motion. The analysis of the causative structuration of the motion situations in (A) and (B) will show that

- a) both the situations include an intermediary component, enabling use of a self-agentive verb (*walk*) that encodes movements with an internally operating energy in situations in which the self-agentive movement is causally related to the movement of an entity external to the agent's body
- b) the situation expressed in (A) differs from the one expressed in (B) in involving an active participation of the patient. In concrete terms, the object shares (or co-shares) the responsibility for its movement (here again, this type of patient may be labelled as "the patientive causee"). This quasi-agentive participation of the patient is the feature that this type of construction has in common with the SA construction and with the construction discussed in the preceding chapter (*John swam the baby to the shore*). The construction exemplified in (B) is devoid of an active participation of the patient. In spite of this, it employs a verb denoting a self-agentive motion with an internally oriented energy. Therefore, it represents a very marginal construction (in fact, as will be discussed later, some speakers evaluate this type of construction as implausible or unacceptable).

Before offering an analysis of the causative structures in question, consider some illustrative examples first:

Type A

(12.20) /.../ she and a husband were desperate for a place to live walked her pram round the courtyard, and observed the two archbishops also circling the courtyard and deep in conversation. (BNC)

(12.21) /.../ Mungo walked the bicycle across, beside Mr Zamoyski's shop, before mounting at the crossroads for the long ride. (BNC)

Type B

(12.22) John walked the letter to the post-office.

(12.23) "It will not be satisfactory to have marched a lot of money up the hill, only to march it down again." (BNC)

Now consider:

a) John walked the bicycle up the hill (/to the top of the hill). -
?? John walked the bicycle.

b) John walked the letter to the post-office. - *John walked the letter.

As can be seen, the absence of a directional phrase results in the unacceptability (or implausibility) of the sentences. The reason for the obligatory

orientedness of the motion in these situations cannot be sought in the basic (self-agentive locomotion) senses of the verb *walk*. When this verb is used to encode movements with one participant (i.e. with the agent) only, it does not need to be complemented by a path phrase. Owing to its nature, walking always involves traversal of a path (*John walked*) even if no resulting localization or orientation of the movement towards some spatial point is implied (as is the case in *John walked in place*).

An explanation of the obligatory presence of a path phrase in the constructions *John walked the bicycle up the hill* and *John walked the letter to the post-office* cannot be sought in the fact that the motion is oriented both internally (the agent executes the motion lexicalized in the verb, i.e. he “moves his body”) and externally (the activity of the agent causes the movement of an entity external to the agent’s body). It is certainly true that in situations encoded in “walking the bicycle/(the letter) to the post-office”, the agent transmits some type of energy to the patient. In “walking the bicycle to the post-office”, the agent, in actual fact, “pushes” the bicycle. In “walking the letter to the post-office”, the agent “carries” the letter.

Although there is some sense in this argumentation, an explanation along these lines loses (some of) its explanatory power in the face of the fact that, generally speaking, constructions expressing the causation of the motion of an object external to the causer’s body by means of the verbs *push* and *carry* may be complete even if the direction of the movement or the final localization of the object is not explicitly specified, cf.:

- (12.24) a) John pushed the cart.
 b) John pushed the cart to the barn.
 (12.25) a) John carried the box.
 b) John carried the box to the boat.

The obligatoriness of a path phrase in “walking the bicycle up the hill” and “walking the letter to the post-office” is an aspect of meaning borne by the structures employing the verbs *bring* and *take*: one cannot just “bring/(take) the letter” but must “bring (/take) it somewhere” (the path phrase can, certainly, be omitted if the verb is used deictically). It is evident, then, that the analysis has to take into consideration not only

- a) the type of movement carried out by the agent
 but also
- b) the type of energy transmitted from the agent to the patient
 and
- c) the localization of the object with respect to the agent’s body.

In what follows, it will be demonstrated that the causative structure of “walking the bicycle up the hill (/the letter to the post-office)” includes certain constitutive features that are present both in “bringing (/taking) something somewhere” and in “carrying/pushing something somewhere”.

Let us first concentrate on the verbs *bring* and *take*. The causative situation encoded in these verbs includes the patient’s change of location, but, as opposed to the verbs *push* or *carry* (*John pushed the cart*, *John carried the letter*), *bring* and *take* are devoid of the information regarding the manner of the activity carried out by the agent. In addition, the verbs are mute about the type of the patient’s localization “at the agent”, so to say (this aspect of meaning is present in *carry* and *push*). The verbs only encode the information that the type of energy transmitted from the agent to the patient is of a stative, not of a dynamic kind. That is, the verbs only express the fact that the patient is “with the agent” and that the agent and the patient change their location. Owing to the sparsity of the information about the type of energy transmitted from the agent to the patient (the patient is merely “with the agent”) and owing to the absence of the information about the manner of motion of the agent, the patient changes its location as a result of the agent’s change of location.

A counter-argument may now be raised, namely, that in *carry* and *push* a directional phrase is not required, in spite of the fact that the object (the patient) changes its location because it is “with” the agent who changes his location (*John carried the letter*). It must be realized, however, that *bring* and *take* do not include information about how the change of location is effected, i.e. they do not include information about the agent’s manner of the movement and about the “manner” of the contact between the agent and the patient (note that the patient does not have to be in direct physical contact with the agent at all, which is typically the case in sentences with animate patients, cf. *John brought (took) Harry to the meeting*). The absence of this information is the reason why *bring* and *take* are inherently telic verbs. Put more precisely, the kinetic structuration of the movement they designate involves one phase only, bounded on both sides, so to say – by the starting (original) position and by the end position. From this it logically follows that a directional phrase encoding the end position must be present.⁴³ In other

43 This situation is also expressed in *put* and *place*, which is precisely the reason why Dowty (1991: 578) can state that in *put something somewhere* the object undergoes two changes: first it is removed from the original position and then placed in its new one.

words, the patient's change in position can only be expressed in a contrastive manner. It is not a coincidence that, in the verbs *bring* and *take*, the profiling of attaining a spatial goal is accompanied by a considerable sparsity of the verb's lexico-semantic content. This fact is a manifestation of a more pervasive tendency to foreground the result of the action and background its manner, and, by the same token, to foreground the manner and background the result. Rappaport Hovav and Levin (1998) observe that "manner verbs" (*sweep, run, jog* or *whistle*, e.g.) differ from "result verbs" (*break, open, come* or *arrive*, e.g.) in that the former lexicalize the manner in which the action is executed, while the latter lexicalize the result achieved. That is, the verbs *bring* and *take* belong to the class of "result verbs" and the verbs *push* and *carry* belong to the class of "manner verbs".

The verbs *walk* and *march* encode what the agent does "with himself", not what he does "with the object" (in *push* and *carry*, by contrast, the activity of the agent is directed at the object, not at the agent himself, hence the verbs encode information about the presence of dynamic energy transmitted from the agent to the patient). In other words, the activity involved in "walking the bicycle up the hill (/the letter to the post-office)", being of an internal type, is not primarily oriented at an object external to the agent. This aspect of meaning is also borne by the verbs *bring* and *take*. That is, although the verbs *walk* and *march* encode, in themselves, the information that the agent traverses a path, the orientation of the motion must be expressed explicitly, by means of a path phrase – only in this way is it possible to express the change of the location of the object. In other words, the translocation of the object in "walking the bicycle up the hill (/the parcel to the post-office)" is not a direct result of the movement denoted by *walk/march*.

Due to the indirectness of the causal relation between the activity of the agent and the translocation of the object (the patient), the causative structure of the situation must involve an intermediary, enabling component, namely, the transmission of dynamic energy from the agent to the patient in the form of direct physical manipulation. Put in plain words, the agent must "hold the object" (as is the case in "walking the letter to the post-office") or "push the object" (as is the case in "walking the bicycle up the hill"). The transmission of this type of energy is necessary, given the fact that, as has already been discussed, the scope of the operation of the energy exerted in walking is confined to the body of the agent (who is the source and, at the same time, the receiver of the energy). Therefore, the energy exerted in walking cannot be presented as transcending the body, i.e. it cannot directly affect an entity external to

the body. Walking can cause the motion of an external object indirectly only, via a mediating causal component – by a release of additional energy which is not part of the walking itself.

The presence of constant and direct physical contact between the agent and the patient, involving the transmission of dynamic energy, makes it possible to encode the situation by means of a syntactic construction in which the object moved appears in a direct object position, i.e. in a construction prototypically used to encode caused motion situations involving a direct, non-mediated causation of the object's movement (*John pushed the cart, John raised the chair, John carried the box, John threw the ball to Harry, John rolled the ball across the garden, e.g.*). In contrast to these lexical causatives, the verb *walk* does not specify the type of physical contact between the agent and the patient and the type of energy transmitted from the agent to the patient. In other words, the movement of the object is not part of the lexico-semantic structure of *walk*. All these aspects of meaning can be decoded by the speaker on the basis of his knowledge of the scenarios in question, i.e. on the basis of what is commonly referred to as “encyclopaedic knowledge”.

As has been demonstrated, the causal structuration in “walking the bicycle up the hill” and “walking the letter to the post-office” attests to the inseparability of the link between the mover and the motion (meant in terms of the type of instigation of the motion and the type of control over its execution) as expressed in the verb *walk*.

This inseparability also asserts itself in the fact that when *walk* is used to encode the causation of the movement of inanimate patients (“translated-objects”, in Tenny’s 1995 terminology), the verbs denote the movement carried out by the causer, not by the patient. This fact underlies the indirectness of the causal relation between the movement of the agent (i.e. the causer of the object’s translocation) and the movement of the patient (needless to say, this fact also underlies the impossibility of the formation of intransitive constructions of the type “the bicycle/(the pram) walked” or “the letter walked”).

In sum, it has been demonstrated that the two types of motion situation represent fused, complex structures, conflating features present in the caused motion situation encoded in *bring* and *take* and features present in the caused motion situation encoded in *push* and *carry* (on the fusion of constructions see, e.g., Goldberg 1995, on the concept of “grammatical blending” as an organizing principle in syntax see Fauconnier and Turner 1996).

In connection with their fused character, it may be interesting to mention that the causative structures under consideration do not admit

the involvement of additional participants. In concrete terms, argument structures of the sentences encoding these situations cannot be augmented by the addition of the “receiver of the object”. Consider:

(12.26) John brought (/took) the parcel to the house.

(12.27) John brought (/took) the parcel to Harry.

The relative emptiness of the verb’s lexico-semantic content (cf. the discussion offered above) makes it possible to use *bring* in an event in which the change of the object’s location is conceptualized as a purely spatial translocation (ex. 12.26) or in an event in which the object’s translocation is conceptualized not as a strictly kinetic change but as a change of the owner (ex. 12.27). In other words, in ex. (12.27) the receiver represents a final locus in a social (interpersonal) domain. In the construction

(12.28) John brought Harry the parcel.

the absence of a directional phrase indicates that the spatial construal is backgrounded in favour of the social, interpersonal construal of the situation.

In *carry* (*push*), by contrast, only the spatial construal is possible:

(12.29) John carried the parcel to the house. (John pushed the cart to the barn.)

(12.30) John carried the parcel to Harry. (John pushed the bicycle to Harry.)

Therefore, the verbs *push* and *carry* do not dativize:

(12.31) ?? John carried Harry the letter.

(12.32) *John pushed Harry the bicycle.

Similarly:

(12.33) John walked the bicycle to Harry.

(12.34) John walked the letter to Harry.

But:

(12.35) *John walked Harry the bicycle.

(12.36) *John walked Harry the letter.

In “walking the bicycle (/the letter) to Harry”, the participant in the oblique phrase does not represent a receiver but a mere final point on

the path. That is, *Harry* marks the end point of the motion and does so only by virtue of his position in space.

12.3.1 Degrees of Active Involvement of the Patient

The semantic roles of the patients in the constructions under consideration differ in the degrees of their active involvement in the execution of the motion lexicalized in the verb. As mentioned above, native speakers differ in their judgements on the acceptability of constructions of the type *John walked the parcel to the post-office*.

By contrast, constructions exemplified by *John walked the pram (/the bicycle) up the hill* type assume a firmly established position in the system of caused motion constructions. The reason is obvious. In “walking the bicycle/the pram”, the patient is an entity capable of moving “by itself”. Put it simply, one can “walk the bicycle” or “walk the pram” because the bicycle (the pram) has wheels and can thus actively participate in the motion. “Walking the bicycle” involves an active co-participation of the object; the object is thus a source of additional energy that has its active share in the motion event. This is precisely the feature which brings this type of causative construction close to the SA type of construction.⁴⁴ From this point of view, the phrases *walk the pram* or *walk the bicycle* cannot be viewed as mere fixed expressions (verging on idiomatcity, perhaps) but as integral parts of the system.

Consider the following example with *the boat* as the object translocated:

- (12.37) Then you can lift the rudder completely, take the daggerboard out and lift, not drag, the boat ashore. Taking it far enough up the beach so that it doesn't blow away again. Launching with an onshore wind demands a positive approach. Walk the boat out until the water is deep enough for you to put the daggerboard down far enough so that you'll be able to sail away. (BNC)

Here, “walking the boat” is parallel to “walking the bicycle (the pram)”: the boat can be “walked” on account of the fact that it moves in the water (not on the ground), hence it is capable of moving “by itself”.

⁴⁴ As Anttila (1989: 106) observes, productivity “involves extension of items in connection with the regular patterns of the grammar, and this is in effect creation, indispensable in speech activity.”

In spite of not being actively involved in the execution of the movement, the patients in examples (12.38) and (12.39) display features that bring them close to agentive causees in SA constructions:

- (12.38) One big mistake I made /.../ was trying to walk the hawk all the way back to its perch. /.../ Picture Derek, or me, walking backwards across a field towards a perch, hawk on glove, trying desperately with our bodies to block the sight of the perch from the alert hawk's vision. /.../ until we were a few yards away from the perch could we turn, hold our arms out and release the jesses so that the bird could fly the rest of the way. (BNC)
- (12.39) They'd all come straight to Ingham's after the Requiem Mass and they were waiting now for John Burns, the undertaker, to come and tell them when the grave was ready at the cemetery and the men would walk the coffin there. (BNC)

Example (12.38) has certain features in common with a prototypical accompaniment scenario. Here, in spite of not executing the motion, the patient's status resembles in some respects the status of an accompanied being. The patient is animate and, no less importantly, retains its more or less independent position with respect to the causer of the movement (the hawk can fly away). Therefore, when it is "walked somewhere" (in the sense "carried somewhere"), it is, in a way, "accompanied somewhere". The same accompaniment reading obtains in example (12.39). Here, *the coffin* is related to the human being by metonymy. It is not a mere "object" because it contains a human, albeit dead. Hence when the coffin is "walked" to the cemetery, the dead body is "accompanied" there.

We can thus conclude that it is the accompaniment meaning of the whole scenario that brings the patients in question close to the causees in SA constructions. Nevertheless, an extremely rare occurrence of these sentences in the BNC is an obvious indication that constructions of this type are on the very periphery of the system.

As regards constructions with totally inactive patients (*John walked the letter to the post-office*), native speakers differ in judging their acceptability (symptomatically, I have not found a single example of this type of construction in the BNC). Due to the fully-fledged patientive (i.e. totally inactive) status of the participant in the object position, such constructions are clearly on the very periphery of the system. Consider also the following example obtained via the Google web search engine:

- (12.40) They are the same size and you are required to move them to another location. You lift the first box and it is very heavy. You struggle as you lift and walk the box to the other location. (<http://www.hockeyheaven.co.uk/?CLASS=Page&DBID=05557200005a36132dce92526f05a741>)

We have seen, then, that the active participation of the patient is a matter of degree. A question now arises, namely: what licenses the formation of constructions exemplified by *John walked the letter to the post-office*, which are, without doubt, on the very periphery of the system? These marginal constructions admit patients that are not actively participating in the motion. That is, they loosen the constraints imposed on the semantics of the patients in the prototypical caused motion scenarios with inanimate patients (e.g., *John brought the parcel to the post-office*). In this respect, they may be evaluated as their variants. This assumption seems to be corroborated by the existence of constructions of the *John walked the hawk* and *They walked the coffin to the cemetery* types, which, with respect to the degree of the active involvement of the patient in the motion, represent an intermediary category between the prototypical constructions of the *John walked the bicycle up the hill* type and the marginal constructions of the *John walked the letter to the post-office* type.