Transitive Structures with Generic or Indefinite Object-Arguments in English as Functionally Antipassive Constructions

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research paper is based on a corpus study which focusses on transitive structures that contain generic or indefinite object-arguments in Present-day English, such as *stuff* in (1) and *anything* in (2) and investigates to what extent these show reduced transitivity and backgrounded discourse status in the sense of Hopper and Thompson (1980).

(1) "The pay has significantly gone up, which is a good thing because it shows they're starting to have trouble recruiting **people**," he said. (WBO)

(2) The system is overreacting to police officers doing **anything**. (WBO)

This study relies on Hopper & Thompson's redefinition of the traditional view of transitivity, or "Transitivity Hypothesis" (1980: 254), which suggests that:

> (…) the presence of an overt O is only one feature of a Transitive clause; it co-exists with other defining properties (such as Agency, Kinesis etc.). And just as a clause may have an overt second participant, and still be aligned with the intransitive clause, so also it may lack a second participant, and yet have Transitive features. (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 266)

The properties just mentioned form a list of ten parameters that correlate (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 255).

The investigated generic and indefinite object-arguments, or object-participants, have the particularity that they score low for one of Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameter, i.e. individuation of the object-argument. Example (1) above indeed exhibits an object-argument with low-individuated features according to Timberlake (1975): *people* is indeed a common, generic, uncount noun which refers to a group of animate entities. Then, *anything* in example (2) is an indefinite and non-referential pronoun analysed as non-individuated since it replaces an inanimate entity.

The study will address four major research questions. The first question precisely investigates the role of this parameter of individuation in relation with Hopper & Thompson's Transitivity Hypothesis (1980: 254) in order to see whether structures containing generic or indefinite object-arguments, such as in (1) and (2), because of their low individuation or lack of it, score low in transitivity with regard to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameters. More precisely, it aims to show to what extent the INDIVIDUATION OF O parameter, and its defining properties of animacy, assertiveness and number, influence the overall transitivity score. Since all the object-participants studied

here were either non-individuated or low-individuated, according to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis, these other parameters should also score low in transitivity. Secondly, this study will demonstrate how Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameters correlate with each other as is suggested in their Transitivity Hypothesis (1980: 255). Then, it will be shown that the data studied do not corroborate Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis about the relation between transitivity and grounding in discourse". The last research question will investigate in which ways the selected set of data shows characteristics of object demotion as it had been suggested by Lambert et al. (2017).

This study is organized as follows. In Section 2, we will address the existing literature on the subject, mainly referring to Hopper & Thompson's Transitivity Hypothesis (1980: 255) and the parameters they developed. Other authors' point of view and contributions to the theory will also be discussed. Section 3 explains the methodology used for this corpus study. Finally, Section 4 will present and discuss the major findings, including those that challenge the existing literature. This last section will be divided in four parts dealing respectively with the transitivity scores for each parameter and lemma studied, the correlations between parameters, the relation between transitivity and discourse and finally, the antipassive constructions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section will first address Hopper & Thompson's conceptual redefinition of transitivity in *Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse* (1980) and the parameters used to characterize clauses and measure their score of transitivity (Section 2.1). Section 2.2 homes in on studies that have characterized clauses with indefinite or generic object-arguments as antipassive constructions.

2.1. Hopper & Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis and its correlation with discourse

2.1.1. The transitivity scale

As already mentioned in the introduction, this study emerges from Hopper & Thompson's article on *Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse* (1980) in which they deconstruct the dichotomous opposition between transitive versus intransitive and claim that transitivity should be seen as a "continuum" (1980: 254), or scalar notion, so that clauses are ranked as "high" (2018: 252) or "low" in transitivity.

In order to characterize concrete realizations on this continuum, Hopper & Thompson (1980) developed a list of ten binary parameters that permit to determine whether a clause is more or less transitive:

> Transitivity, then, viewed in the most conventional and traditional way possible – as a matter of carrying-over or transferring an action from one participant to another – can be broken down into its component parts, each focusing on a different facet of this carrying-over in a different part of the clause. Taken together, they allow clauses to be characterized as MORE OR LESS Transitive: the more features a clause has in the 'high' column in IA-J, the more Transitive it is—the closer it is to CARDINAL Transitivity. (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 253)

Figure 1 presents all the parameters and values. Again, the parameters themselves should not be perceived as purely dichotomous because, as Cooreman points out, most of "the parameters are to be interpreted as scalar in nature, where properties at the extreme ends correspond to high and low degrees of transitivity respectively" (1994: 63). The following subsections discuss each of these parameters individually; examples of their values will be provided in Section 4.1 below.

	HIGH	LOW
PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants, A and O	1 participant
KINESIS	action	non-action
ASPECT	telic	atelic
PUNCTUALITY	punctual	non-punctual
VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
AFFIRMATION	affirmative	negative
MODE	realis	irrealis
AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
INDIVIDUATION OF O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

Figure 1: Classification of the parameters (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252)

Next to their main claim, Hopper & Thompson (1980) also argue that these parameters correlate with each other, as it will be developed in Section 4.1.2. This argument is defended in their TRANSITIVITY HYPOTHESIS:

> If two clauses (a) and (b) in a language differ in that (a) is higher in Transitivity according to any of the features IA-J, then, if a concomitant grammatical or semantic difference appears elsewhere in the clause, that difference will also show (a) to be higher in Transitivity. (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 255)

2.1.1.1. Participants

This study relies on a verb argument structure approach of grammar, which is concerned with valency, defined by Quirk et al. as the "way in which a verb determines the kinds and numbers of elements that can accompany it in the clause" (1985: 1169). Verb argument structure presupposes the existence of three core grammatical functions in the clause: the subject of an intransitive clause (S), the subject of a transitive clause (A) and the object of a transitive clause (O), also referred to as patient (P).

According to Hopper & Thompson (1980), a first parameter to consider in order to determine the transitivity of a clause is consequently the number of participants accompanying the verb. It is also on the basis of this parameter that *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* primarily distinguishes between transitive and intransitive clauses:

> Whereas all canonical clauses contain an S, they may or may not contain an O, depending on the nature of the verb. This yields the important contrast referred to as transitivity – a transitive clause contains an O, an intransitive one does not. (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 216)

As Hopper & Thompson (1980) rather view transitivity as a scalar notion, their distinction is not as dichotomous. They consider the occurrence of two participants as determining because, relating to their definition of transitivity as implying a transfer, a successfully accomplished action must be transferred from one participant to the other (1980: 253), but it is certainly not the only feature that should be taken into account and transitivity should not be reduced to this parameter only. A sentence involving two or more participants, i.e. the agent and at least one object, is thus considered as high in transitivity whereas one that only counts one participant, i.e. the subject, is lower on the scale of transitivity.

2.1.1.2. Kinesis

The two authors also concentrate on the nature of the event expressed by the verb, its kinesis, and suggest a distinction between ACTION, typically high in transitivity, and NON-ACTION (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) in this study labelled as STATE, which is typically lower in potency. An action implies dynamicity, room for development or change and consequently enhances the possibility of a transfer between two participants (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 253) whereas a state verb cannot properly be transferred.

2.1.1.3. Aspect

Hopper & Thompson (1980) propose as additional parameter that of aspect, which relates to "the internal temporal structure of an event" (Todorova et al. 2000: 1). They first make a distinction between telicity and perfectivity: "whereas telicity can be determined generally by a simple inspection of the predicate, perfectivity is a property that emerges

only in discourse" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 270). Since perfectivity is not grammatically conveyed in English – although imperfectivity is often associated with the English progressive aspect – Hopper & Thompson (1980) delimit the notion of aspect to that of telicity and put forward an opposition between a TELIC and an ATELIC event, respectively "viewed from its endpoint" (1980: 252) or not.

Telicity is in Hopper & Thompson's theory opposed to Aktionsart (1980: 271), or lexical aspect, also called situation-type, which "comprises those manners of viewing an action which are predictable from the lexical meaning of the verb, such as punctual and durative – in other words, the inherent type of action of the verb" (271). However, telicity is, as claimed by Todorova et al., typical of 'the lexical-conceptual structures of events" (2000: 1). The terminology used by Hopper & Thompson (1980) is not unequivocal. In a lexical, or situation-type, approach a verb like *eat* without object would be atelic (once something is consumed it's over) but Hopper & Thompson (1980) make a distinction between *I ate it up* and *I am eating it*:

> In the telic sentence *I ate it up*, the activity is viewed as completed, and the transferral is carried out in its entirety; but in the atelic *I am eating it*, the transferral is only partially carried out. (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252)

This distinction suggests that the authors also take grammatical aspect into account. A clause such as *I was eating it* is nevertheless problematical to analyse according to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) delineation of telicity: on the one hand, the event described is situated in the past and should then be analysed as completed, so telic, but on the other hand it is conjugated in the past continuous, a tense which typically conveys ongoing events. An action which is still ongoing, is not completed yet, so it is atelic.

As the reasoning followed in this paper is that grammatical aspect and lexical aspect interact, and the term telicity does not adequately convey this claim, an alternative terminology, borrowed to Todorova et al. (2000) is favoured, i.e. that of boundedness, which is to be considered "at the sentential level of interpretation where the logical endpoint of an event is understood to have been instantiated" (Todorova et al. 2000: 1). Since "aspectual distinctions are anchored around the presence or absence of logical boundaries in the denotation of events" (Todorova et al. 2000: 1), BOUNDED events are considered to imply a "necessary and/or realized event boundary" (Todorova et al. 2000:

1) and UNBOUNDED events get a rather "open-ended" (Todorova et al. 2000: 1) aspectual reading. Bounded events typically score high in transitivity, because they are more "effectively transferred" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) from the agent to the patient, whereas unbounded events are lower in potency.

To conclude on aspect, Næss (2007: 78) and Dowty (1991: 591) have argued that the definiteness and number of the object-participant also influence the aspectual interpretation of the event. This is also underlined by Todorova et al.: "singular and/or definite (count) objects support telic interpretations, whereas bare plural and/or mass noun objects support atelic interpretations of the verbal predicate" (2000: 2). According to Todorova et al. (2000), these aspectual interpretations can be explained by an induced iterative reading of the verb: for instance the verb *send* gets an "iterative interpretation when combined with a bare plural or mass noun object: The predicate '*send letters*' denotes a process that can potentially repeat itself over an indefinitely long period" (2000: 2). An event which repeats itself over time does not contain a logical boundary and is thus unbounded.

2.1.1.4. Punctuality

Hopper & Thompson (1980) also underline the importance of the punctuality of the event, i.e. its duration. They explain the correlation between punctuality and transitivity as follows: "actions carried out with no obvious transitional phase between inception and completion have a more marked effect on their patients than actions which are inherently on-going" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252). Verbs that express events happening in a very short period of time would thus be coded as PUNCTUAL and they favour an effective transfer, whereas durative and iterative verbs are considered as NON-PUNCTUAL and lower in transitivity.

2.1.1.5. Agency

As it has already been explained in Section 2.1.1.1 on the participant-parameter, the theory of verb argument structure on which this study relies, presupposes the existence of three core grammatical functions. The parameter of agency focusses on the role of agent (A), which is claimed by Hopper & Thompson (1980) to influence the degree of transitivity of a clause. The "transferral" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) of an action

is presented as more effective when initiated by an A HIGH IN POTENCY – i.e. a human, or at least animate, agent – than when initiated by an A LOW IN POTENCY – i.e. inanimate.

2.1.1.6. Volitionality

The parameter of volitionality supports the idea that a purposeful activity supposedly enhances the effectiveness of an action (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252). Since this notion involves a certain involvement of the agent, it is inherently linked with the preceding parameter so that a VOLITIONAL verb "requires an agentive subject – one that is human, or at least animate" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 286). NON-VOLITIONAL verbs would, on the contrary, express an absence of will or intent typical, for instance, of accidental actions (e.g. *drop*), perception verbs (e.g. *see*, *hear*), or of events initiated by inanimate agents. In this context, Næss' (2007) distinction between *volition* and *instigation* is relevant: in "The ball broke the window" (Næss 2007: 117), the agent (*the ball*) is instigating the action but it is non-volitional (because the implied agent, the person who threw the ball, didn't want it to happen). A volitionally accomplished action enhances the effectivity of its transfer, and so its transitivity score, whereas a non-volitional action hinders this transfer and scores lower on the transitivity scale.

Furthermore, as far as volitionality of experiencer verbs is concerned, Næss (2007) also adds further comments to those advanced by Hopper & Thompson (1980). Hopper & Thompson suggest that verbs expressing emotions – such as *like* – are non-volitional – because of "an absence of voluntary participation by the A" (1980: 254). Their analysis thus contrasts with that of Næss (2007: 116), who considers that such experiencer verbs are volitional on the part of the agent, because the agent needs to use their brain and senses to experience, perceive the object. Section 4.1.1.6 will describe in more details how these verbs were analysed in the context of this corpus study.

2.1.1.7. Affirmation

The affirmation-parameter studies the polarity of the clause and opposes AFFIRMATIVE clauses to NEGATIVE clauses. An additional value is also added in the context of this corpus analysis in order to keep track of examples where the negation resides in a higher clause. Negative clauses limit or prevent the "transferral" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) of an action as Næss explains: "under negation (...), not only is the subject no longer

instigating, but the object is no longer affected – an event which is not instigated and therefore does not take place, cannot either produce an effect on any entity" (2007: 116). In other words, if the agent does not instigate an event, the "transferral" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) that typifies transitive structures is no longer possible and the transitivity score is lowered.

2.1.1.8. Mode

Another transitivity feature is the mode, for which Hopper & Thompson (1980) propose an opposition between REALIS and IRREALIS. Irrealis events are less effective because they occur in a "non-real (contingent) world" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) or did not occur at all whereas realis events are "actually asserted as corresponding directly with a real event" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252) and thus score higher in transitivity. Among the properties that can trigger an irrealis interpretation, a first one is negation, to which it is actually closely related: "an event which is presented as not occurring, or as occurring only hypothetically or under non-real circumstances, cannot be conceived of as actually being instigated, or as having any effects on actually observable entities" (Næss 2007: 117). Modality – be it dynamic, deontic or epistemic – is also a factor of decrease in transitivity as it questions the effective realization of an event, just like interrogative or conditional sentences. Finally, intentional verbs, such as *want* or *try to*, also make for irrealis contexts because they indicate a desire or a plan but do not implicate that the action expressed by the main verb does occur.

2.1.1.9. Affectedness of the object

In the context of a definition of transitivity as conveying a transferral between two participants (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252), Hopper & Thompson claim that "the degree to which an action is transferred to a patient is a function of how completely that patient is affected (…)" (1980: 252-253) and they thus propose as essential criterion that of affectedness. Object-arguments are classified into TOTALLY AFFECTED or NON-AFFECTED. The first type features a high transitivity score whereas the second is rated as lower in on the transitivity scale. However, the values that characterize affectedness have to be analysed as scalar rather than dichotomous (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 253; Næss 2007: 44). As was already explained in Section 2.1.1, although the parameters present

binary oppositions of values, they should not be analysed purely dichotomously. They should in fact be placed on a cline with at one extreme totally affected objects and at the other non-affected ones. In between of course, some objects can be said to be partially affected, as in the following sentence: *He kicked at the horse*, which can be opposed to *He kicked the horse*. In the second example the horse is certainly affected by the kicking and may be hurt but in the first example we could say that someone has directed a kick at the horse but we don't know for sure whether the horse has been touched; the object in the first sentence would therefore be analysed as non-affected. In the context of this study, partially affected objects were thus analysed as non-affected.

According to Næss, affectedness is one of the three core features that characterize transitivity – along with volitionality and instigation (2007: 106). She qualifies affectedness as the property of participants "undergoing a change of state" (2007: 63) and although she presents the parameter as a defining property of patients (Næss 2007: 57), she also develops affectedness of the agent (2007: 57). However, affectedness of the agent will not be developed in this paper.

Another interesting distinction made by Næss (2007) is that between affected objects and so-called "effected objects" (Næss 2007: 103). The latter refer to "objects which come into being as a result of the action decribed [*sic*] by the verb" (Næss 2007: 103) and are consequently considered as not affected by the verb because they only exist after the action expressed by the verb is realized (Næss 2007: 104) so that they cannot be said to undergo the change of state typical of affected objects (Næss 2007: 63). Næss (2007) illustrates such a construction featuring an effected object with the verb *bake* for which she opposes *bake potatoes* to *bake pastries* (2007: 235). In the former example the potatoes exist before the act of baking and are affected objects whereas in the latter example the pastries are created through the act of baking and are consequently to be analysed as effected (Næss 2007: 235). However, as was already mentioned in the previous paragraph, the approach favoured in this study was to consider affectedness on a cline rather than purely dichotomously. It is for this reason that this difference between affected and effected objects was not taken into account; effected objects were classified as affected as long as the verb had a certain impact on the object because they still show a higher degree of affectedness than, for instance, perception verbs.

2.1.1.10. Individuation of the object

Finally, the last parameter advanced by Hopper & Thompson (1980) is concerned with the individuation of the object (O) of a transitive clause, which is dichotomously separated in either: O HIGHLY INDIVIDUATED or O NON-INDIVIDUATED. The properties of both types of object are inspired on Timberlake (1975), and listed in figure 2:

INDIVIDUATED	NON-INDIVIDUATED
proper	common
human, animate	inanimate
concrete	abstract
singular	plural
count	mass
referential, definite	non-referential

Figure 2: properties of individuated and non-individuated objects (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 253)

Still in the context of a view of transitivity as a transferral between two participants, it seems logical to state that the more individuated and the more definite the object is, the more efficient the transferral can be (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 253). This paragraph discusses the features associated with individuated and non-individuated objects introduced in Figure 2. Examples (3) and (4) aim to illustrate these features.

(3) He hit Suzan while going through the crowd.

(4) He hit some stones while going backwards with his car.

The first feature is concerned with the type of noun used as object, i.e. a proper noun, as *Suzan* or a common noun, as *stone*. In the example (3) *Suzan* is more easily identifiable than a *stone* in example (4). Moreover, she has probably been hurt or affected by the strike whereas the effect of the hitting in example (4) is less important. The second criterion is that of animacy with human and animate objects making their constructions higher in individuation as opposed to inanimate objects which tend to reduce the transitivity score. In example (4), the *stones* are thus lower in individuation because they

are inanimate. The third property deals with the semantic class of noun and classifies them as either concrete or abstract. Concrete nouns are higher in individuation. Then, the grammatical number is also determining for the individuation-classification so that singular nouns are higher in individuation than their plural counterparts. *A stone*, in example (4), would have been more precise than *some stones*. What Timberlake names "partitivity" (1975: 134), i.e. the distinction between count nouns and mass nouns, forms another feature of individuation, with the former scoring higher in transitivity than the latter. Again, the singular count noun *stone* is more easily delineable than the uncountable noun *rock*, for instance. Finally, the last property of individuation is referentiality. A referential or definite object scores higher in individuation, and consequently in transitivity, than a non-referential one. *Suzan*, being a proper noun, is typically referential and one should be able to identify this participant in a specific context, but *some stones* do not refer to any specific entity and it is not as precise as *the stone*, for instance.

According to Hopper and Thompson, it seems that amongst these properties, those of "definiteness and referentiality of O's played the most important role in correlating with other features of high Transitivity" (1980: 287). Hopper & Thompson even add that referentiality is even more determining in terms of transitivity score than definiteness (1980: 288).

As was mentioned in the introduction, this study investigates the role of this parameter of individuation of the object-argument, so that a set of these properties were applied for the selection of data. They will be discussed in Section 3 on methodology.

2.1.2. Transitivity and discourse

Next to the ten parameters that measure the degree of transitivity of each construction in order to place them on a scale of transitivity, Hopper and Thompson (1980) also developed a second main claim. According to them, transitivity can also be related to discourse, which functions as a "unifying principle" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 280) so that each of the parameters they introduce are "discourse-determined" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 251) and interrelated (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 294).

Discourse, which is linguistically referred to as grounding, allows to make a difference between FOREGROUND and BACKGROUND. They are defined as follows: the foreground contains "main points of the discourse" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 280) and

the background is the "part of a discourse which does not immediately and crucially contribute to the speaker's goal, but which merely assists, amplifies, or comments on it (…)" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 280). In terms of chronology, we can add that the foregrounded clauses are ordered chronologically (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 281) whereas the occurrence of backgrounded clause is not driven by chronological order (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 281).

Hopper & Thompson (1980) argue that a foregrounded bit of discourse would typically be transitive, whereas a backgrounded part would tend to be less transitive: "(…) the likelihood that a clause will receive a foregrounded interpretation is proportional to the height of that clause on the scale of Transitivity" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 284). Consequently, for each of the ten parameters, the value which scores high on the transitivity scale would typify foregrounded clauses. Below each parameter is briefly discussed individually with regard to the grounding distinction in order to underline the existing correlations. The claims are based on statistical evidence from a cross-linguistic corpus analysis.

First, with regard to the participants-parameter, it can be noticed that backgrounded clauses usually involve one participant only, which is typical of clauses describing the scenery (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 284).

The kinesis-parameter also shows a strong correlation between the feature high in potency, i.e. actions, and foregrounded discourse. Foregrounded passages indeed typically narrate events and actions, "changes of places or condition" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 285).

Regarding aspect, Hopper & Thompson (1980) demonstrate that a foregrounded clause is typically telic because it is "bounded at its beginning by the termination of the preceding event and at its end by the initiation of the next event" (286). Conversely, backgrounded clauses describe repeated, habitual or on-going events (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 286).

Affectedness, which Hopper & Thompson often associate with perfectivity, consequently correlates with foregrounding (1980: 287).

With regard to punctuality, the authors claim that punctual events are often foregrounded as "punctual verbs are more likely to denote events of the discourse" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 286).

Then volitionality and agency can be grouped since "story lines are typically advanced by people who deliberately initiate events" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 286). Volitional verbs and agents high in potency are thus typically observable in foregrounded passages.

Similarly mode and affirmation are also analysed as highly correlating with grounding. Realis clauses and affirmative clauses both predominantly occur in foregrounded parts of discourse (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 287).

Finally, the core properties associated with individuation – i.e. definiteness and referentiality – are also the most determining for the grounding analysis. According to Hopper & Thompson, a highly-individuated object, typically definite, is very often "encoded as the topic of the clause" (1980: 289). Their corpus analysis has shown that such constructions with the topic, i.e. the key piece of information, on the object typically occur in foregrounded discourse (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 289).

To conclude on grounding, it is important to mention that Hopper & Thompson (1980) have based their analysis on the narrative genre (1980: 282) and have not truly investigated grounding in conversation. This can justify some datable issues in the practical application of the theory. Cooreman (1994) indeed highlights a possible failure in Hopper & Thompson's (1980) description of foreground and background, as respectively containing either the main events or comments (Cooreman 1994: 69), because this definition seems to rely on narratives only: "It is quite likely that these claims apply only to narrated discourse and that organizational principles other than temporal sequential order need to be called upon in other text genres to distinguish foregrounded from backgrounded parts of the discourse)" (Cooreman 1994: 69). This last comment was considered as particularly useful and relevant for the corpus analysis. The definition of both types of discourse will thus be slightly reworked and discussed in Section 3 and they will be illustrated in Section 4.2.

2.2. Antipassive constructions

Next to the investigation on Hopper & Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis and on the relation between transitivity and discourse, the other main claim developed in this research paper concerns the emergence of a new form of antipassive construction in English with the use of generic or indefinite items in object position, based on Cooreman

(1994) and Sanso (2017). Both authors have been writing on antipassive constructions in ergative languages.

In ergative languages, the antipassive is a valency-decreasing mechanism (Sanso 2017: 201) which gives "the possibility of manipulating the argument structure of the verb by removing (e.g., in nominalizations) or downplaying (e.g., in generic object constructions or in reciprocals) the object" (Sanso 2017: 203). It traditionally emerges as a result of a "detransitivization" (Cooreman 1994: 64) process, through which the transitive construction becomes intransitive. Although the antipassive construction can take various forms, the traditional, formal, account of antipassive constructions is indeed that of a "morphosyntactic alternative for the same transitive proposition" (Cooreman 1994: 50), which scores lower in transitivity. Example (5b) gives a typical example of antipassive borrowed to Cooreman (1994: 54) and given in Chamorro, an ergative language:

(5) a. *Ha - konne' i peskadot i guihan.*
ERG.3SG - catch the fisherman the fish
'The fisherman caught the fish.'

b. *Mangonne' (guihan) i peskadot.*
AP.catch (fish) the fisherman
'The fisherman caught a fish/fish (something).'

Example (5a) illustrates a transitive construction, with ergative marking on the verb whereas (5b) illustrates its antipassive counterpart, which it gets an antipassive marking. The important piece of information in (5b) is no longer what the fisherman caught or which fish precisely but the fact that he caught something. The object is consequently "demoted" (Sanso 2017: 181) and the valency is decreased. Example (5b) could also be said to support Cooreman's claim on the function of antipassive constructions: "the antipassive which is used for semantic/pragmatic reasons is best described as indicating a certain degree of difficulty with which an effect stemming from an activity by A on an identifiable O can be recognized" (1994:51). In the absence of a context to this utterance, this argument cannot be applied with certainty but it still seems acceptable to say that the choice of the second construction was motivated by the will to express the effort that has been made by the fisher in order to eventually catch something.

This study argues that constructions with indefinite or generic object-arguments functions as antipassive constructions although they do not display the traditional transformation form, in which the object can be completely omitted or converted into a peripheral argument (Sanso 2017: 177).

In his diachronic study of antipassive constructions, Sanso describes the main function of antipassive constructions as "object demotion" (2017: 176) and proposes four sources for the emergence of antipassives, including "generic/indefinite items filling the object position (e.g., "person" for animate objects, "(some)thing" for inanimate objects)" (Sanso 2017: 175). Starting his analysis with a general definition of antipassives as "formally intransitive constructions" (Sanso 2017: 176), the author develops the claim that the process through which this definition has changed is one of grammaticalization (Sanso 2017: 188). Sanso indeed describes this process based on her data on ergative languages and concludes that "the generic noun first grammaticalizes into a marker of agent or action nominalization, which in turn represents the source construction of the eventual AP construction" (2017: 188).

This hypothesis on an interpretation of constructions with generic or indefinite object-participants as antipassives had however already developed in 1994 by Cooreman, who had mentioned the variety of existing forms of antipassives (1994: 50). She claims, relying on her cross-linguistic corpus analysis, that such constructions score low in transitivity according to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameters, which supports their "Transitivity Hypothesis" (Cooreman 1994: 63):

> Of the ten paramaters [*sic*] listed in Hopper and Thompson, nine are reflected in the functions described for the antipassive so far. In each case the functions identified in this paper correspond with that end of the parameter indicating a lower degree of transitivity. (Cooreman 1994: 64)

However, the explanation of this claim is very short, it reveals that these correlations are mainly observable in one specific language and have not been asserted in other languages. These correlations between the antipassives and low values on the transitivity scale are nevertheless mentioned and discussed in the following paragraphs. Section 4.2.3 will aim to show whether these claims can be corroborated.

First, just like Hopper & Thompson (1980), Cooreman also regards identifiability and referentiality as being determining features for the individuation parameter: "The

occurrence of an antipassive in many languages correlates with a low degree of identifiablity [*sic*] of the O in the proposition" (1994: 52). Constructions containing indefinite or generic object-arguments obviously score low in terms of individuation because they do not refer to a specific instance.

Second, related to the participants-parameter, Cooreman (1994) underlines that antipassives often make use of object deletion and in the case of a generic or indefinite objects, their lack of referentiality makes it similar to an absence of object, or object deletion (1994: 56). The antipassive construction thus only features one argument and scores low in transitivity for this parameter.

Based on her analysis of ergative languages, it also appears that events described in antipassives constructions can often be qualified as "incomplete" (Cooreman 1994: 57), "non-punctual" (Cooreman 1994: 57), or "without a perceptible onset or conclusion" (Cooreman 1994: 57). This is to be related to a low score in terms of aspect and punctuality and Hopper & Thompson's (1980) description of atelic and non-punctual events.

Then, Cooreman (1994) observes a correlation between antipassives and low affectedness (Cooreman 1994: 58) and supports this finding with data from various ergative languages. The motive behind these correlations however varies from one language to the other.

Finally, Cooreman mentions other correlations but she actually classifies them as "marginal or infrequent" (1994: 62). Cooreman refers to "counterfactualness" (1994: 62) and under which she gathers Hopper & Thompson's (1980) mode and affirmation parameters. However, this correlation is only attested by one of all the languages she analysed (Cooreman 1994: 62) so its accuracy is questionable. She also observes a "lack of volitionality on the part of the A" (Cooreman 1994: 62) but expresses reservation on the validity of this result. Agency is not taken into consideration in her study.

Next to these correlations between antipassive constructions and a low transitivity score for some of Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameters, Cooreman (1994) also develops Hopper & Thompson's (1980) second major finding on grammar and discourse and suggests that antipassives also typically occur in backgrounded discourse. According to her, this is also typically the case for generic and indefinite objects:

> Os which are expressed but marked as indefinite, often generic or non-referential, cannot be identified uniquely by the hearer. As a result, their identity could never be of any major importance to the discourse and can be considered as part of the background. (Cooreman 1994: 67)

To conclude on antipassive constructions, a more recent input to the theoretical background has been added by Lambert et al. (2017) who have been investigating the English language. They studied transitive structures containing generic/indefinite object-arguments, concentrating on the lemmas *people*, *folks*, *things*, *stuff* and *shit(s)*. From a corpus analysis, they observed that these object-participants "merely function as filler elements, used to satisfy the argument-structure requirements imposed by the verb" (2017). The authors also noticed that constructions containing such object-participants mainly appear in backgrounded portions of discourse so that they suggest to analyse these as "emergent antipassive constructions" (Lambert et al. 2017) although they will probably never result in a complete deletion of the object (Lambert et al. 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions and interact with the existing literature, a corpus study was carried out. The data were extracted from Wordbanks*Online* (henceforth WBO), with as only specificity the choice of US subcorpora. The queries allowed up to three intervening words between the verb and the object participant, as exemplified in this template: [tag="V.*"][]{0,3}[lemma="people"]. Eight different queries were run, corresponding to the eight different lemmas that had been selected in order to expose diversity in terms of individuation properties (mentioned in Figure 2, Section 2.1.1.10). A first distinction was made in terms of animacy, with *people*, *someone*, *anyone*, *somebody* and *anybody* as human entities and *stuff*, *something* and *anything* as inanimate entities. Then, *people* and *stuff* as generic, plural and uncount nouns are opposed to *someone*, *anyone*, *somebody*, *anybody*, *something*, *anything* as indefinite pronouns. Within the pronouns, half are asserted, i.e. affirmative, and referential: *someone*, *somebody*, *something* and half are non-asserted, i.e. negative, and non-referential: *anyone*, *anybody* and *anything*. The distribution is illustrated in Figure 3.

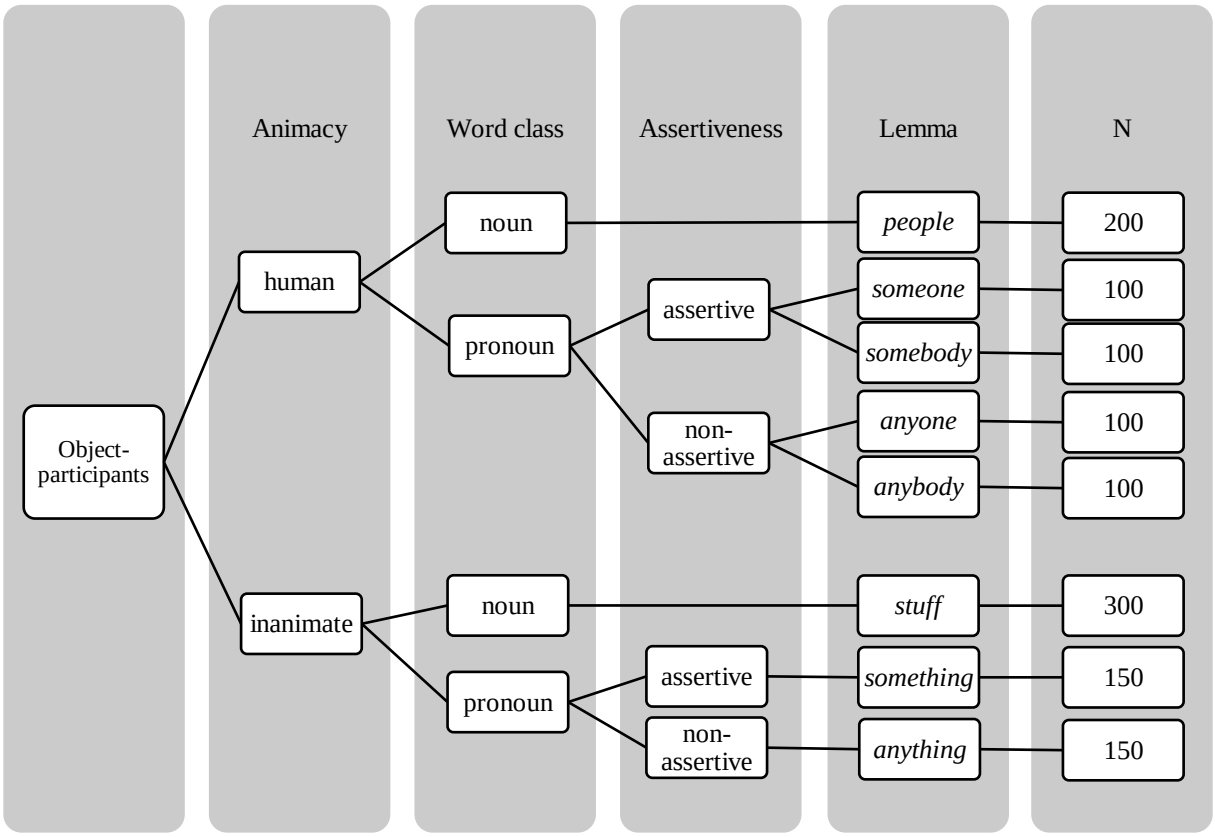

Figure 3: Categorization of the lemmas investigated

The first sorting aimed to remove double hits. The second task consisted in the sorting of the retrieved hits into relevant and irrelevant. The irrelevant instances were rejected either because the lemma did not appear as object-argument, as in example (6), in which it is for instance used as subject. Constructions including copular verbs like *be* as in example (7) were also discarded. Similarly, cases in which the O-participant was associated with a peripheral adjunct as shown in example (8), or instances in which the punctuation intervened between the verb and the lemma and modified the role of the presupposed object, as visible in example (9), were also deemed as irrelevant. Finally, the lemma *stuff* was sometimes used as a verb rather than as a noun, e.g. (10), in which case the example was also discarded.

(6) Just out of curiosity, is there **anyone** else who thinks Philadelphia's economy doesn't need more skilled workers? (WBO)
(7) A soul mate is not just **somebody** that you need. (WBO)
(8) Dr Benwa represented **something** of a miracle himself. (WBO)
(9) As the troops surrounding the theatre began to withdraw, **people** put flowers around the site. (WBO)
(10) They had to **stuff** them with tissues so they wouldn’t fall off. (WBO)

As far as the analysis of the relevant instances is concerned, the same amount of relevant examples was retrieved from the exhaustive samples for both human and inanimate object-participants, which amounts to random samples of 1200 analysed examples. As shown in Figure 3, 200 relevant examples were retrieved for the generic, low-individuated object-participant (*people*) and 100 for each of the indefinite, low-individuated object-participants (*anyone*, *someone*, *anybody* and *somebody*), 300 examples were retrieved for the generic, non-individuated (*stuff*) and 150 for the indefinite, non-individuated object-participants (*something* and *anything*). In addition to the transitivity parameters from Hopper & Thompson (1980), discussed in Section 2.1.1, this study investigates six more. Two of them analysed the premodification and postmodification of the object (pro)noun. A third parameter aimed to specify the tactic status of the clause containing the object (i.e. main clause, adverbial clause, complement clause or relative clause). Three more parameters characterized the lexical verb combining with the object, its form and its semantic class. The semantic classification of verbs was based on the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al.

1999: 361-364), which distinguishes between activity verbs (e.g. *eat*), communication verbs (e.g. *talk*), mental verbs (e.g. *know*), verbs of facilitation or causation (e.g. *allow*), verbs of existence or relationship (e.g. *be*) and aspectual verbs (e.g. *begin*).

Taking into account that one of the goals of this study is to prove the emergence of antipassive constructions in English characterized by the generic or indefinite object-arguments, the parameter of individuation of the object (see Section 2.1.1.10) was controlled for by the mere selection of data studied. All the object lemmas studied here were either non-individuated – *stuff*, *something*, *anything* – or low-individuated – *people*, *someone*, *somebody*, *anyone*, *anybody* and the individuation parameter was thus not coded for.

In order to analyse grounding for each hit, it was necessary to add more specifications to the theory developed by Hopper & Thompson (1980) which, as already mentioned in Section 2.1.2, is not applicable to all types of discourse. Two different procedures could thus be singled out. On the one hand, when dealing with narratives (sources such as US.books), a description of event was discursively less relevant than the conversational content. Indeed, what really pushes forward the development of a story in books is often the conversational parts, which is why these are most often considered as foregrounded bits of discourse.

On the other hand, with non-narrative types of discourse, a foregrounded passage is always one that stands out in terms of informative content. New information is typically considered as foregrounded whereas the explanation of a preceding clause is viewed as backgrounded because it is not as informatively relevant as the main clause. For instance, in a press article, quotations are often used to reinforce the journalist's claim, which is often expressed either at the very beginning or at the very end of paragraph.

These two concepts of foreground and background will be illustrated in Section 4.2.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The Transitivity Hypothesis (Hopper & Thompson 1980)

This section first presents the results associated with each transitivity parameter studied for all the object-participants and investigates the possible influence of the individuation features manipulated in this study, i.e. animacy, word class and assertiveness. Then, it demonstrates how the transitivity parameters studied correlate with each other as was predicted by Hopper & Thompson (1980: 255).

4.1.1. Transitivity parameters

4.1.1.1. Participants

The results of the analysis of the parameter of number of participants, visible in Table 1, show that in 88.75% of the examples, the construction contains two overtly expressed participants: an agent and an object, as in example (11), or three participants as in (12), which instantiates a ditransitive construction with three participants: agent (i.e. *I*), indirect object (i.e. *you*) and direct object (i.e. *this stuff*). Furthermore, the few clauses which occur with only one participant do of course include the object – which is a constant in this study – but are missing an agent – which is in fact implied, as will be discussed in Section 4.1.1.5 on agency. This latter possibility is illustrated in example (13), where the verb is used in the imperative mood, with which the agent is prototypically omitted. Another example is given in (14), where the agent is also omitted in the context of an infinitive clause.

(11) I would not advise **anybody** to go there to see it. (WBO)

(12) As part of my penance, I had to tell you this **stuff**. (WBO)

(13) Forget the hot **stuff** and look beyond appearances – at least occasionally. (WBO)

(14) "The last thing I'm trying to do is to put **anybody** out of business," said Tony Colletti, executive vice president of the Community Financial Services Association, which represents about 60 percent of payday lenders nationally. (WBO)

The results illustrated in Table 1 indicate that the examples generally score high on the parameter of number of participants, with 88.75% showing more than one overtly expressed participant. As far as animacy is concerned, human object-participants occur

in examples with one participant twice as often as inanimate object-participants (14.83% vs. 7.67% respectively). In fact, that difference is more pronounced than that between pronouns and generic nouns or between asserted and non-asserted forms.

Table 1: Distribution of the participants-parameter for each O-participant

	more than one		**one**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
HUMAN	**511**	**85.17%**	**89**	**14.83%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	93	93.00%	7	7.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	89	89.00%	11	11.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	161	80.50%	39	19.50%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	90	90.00%	10	10.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	78	78.00%	22	22.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**554**	**92.33%**	**46**	**7.67%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	144	96.00%	6	4.00%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	137	91.33%	13	8.67%	150	100.00%
STUFF	273	91.00%	27	9.00%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**1065**	**88.75%**	**135**	**11.25%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.2. Kinesis

As was stated in Section 2.1.1.2., a distinction is made for this parameter between action verbs and state verbs. Due to the low-individuation or non-individuation of object-participants, kinesis should also score low in transitivity so that the objects should mainly occur with state verbs. However, the relative frequencies presented in Table 2 show that in 73.25% of the cases they occur with verbs high in potency, i.e. action verbs, with almost no difference between human object-participants and inanimate object-participants. Instances of action verbs are introduced in examples (15) and (16). In example (15) the call between two people naturally involves a transfer and in example (16) the verb *collect* also suggests dynamicity, since the stuff is being moved from one place to another. Examples (17) and (18) instantiate constructions with state verbs and do not allow for

such dynamicity or change: the verbs *have* and *know* express have no effect on their objects so that there is no transfer between the two participants.

(15) "I think they should have at least called us or call **somebody** after Patrick went missing for three or four days." (WBO)

(16) And then she'd turned and gone to her desk and started collecting her **stuff**. (WBO)

(17) And the new government has some good **people** in it. (WBO)

(18) "I know **someone** you should talk to about all of that," she said. (WBO)

Within state verbs, the following were the most recurrent: *have, know* and *see* whereas *do, kill, say* and *find* were the most frequently used action verbs. Although Table 2 shows a majority of action verbs for all the studied object-participants, it is interesting to mention that there is nevertheless a small difference between generic noun and indefinite pronouns, since the first ones – i.e. *people* and *stuff* – occur with a higher percentage, i.e. of 10%, of action verbs than the pronouns. There is no significant difference in the frequency of action verbs for asserted versus non-asserted pronouns and no difference either in terms of animacy.

Table 2: Distribution of the kinesis features for each O-participant

	action		**state**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
HUMAN	**438**	**73.00%**	**162**	**27.00%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	70	70.00%	30	30.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	69	69.00%	31	31.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	162	81.00%	38	19.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	67	67.00%	33	33.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	70	70.00%	30	30.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**441**	**73.50%**	**159**	**26.50%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	101	67.33%	49	32.67%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	111	74.00%	39	26.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	229	76.33%	71	23.67%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**879**	**73.25%**	**321**	**26.75%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.3. Aspect

As was explained in Section 2.1.1.3, the boundedness terminology was favoured for the analysis of aspect. A bounded event is thus an event for which the logical boundary is explicitly or implicitly mentioned, just as in examples (19) and (20), whereas an unbounded event lacks this boundary, e.g. examples (21), (22) and (23). Example (19) illustrates a bounded event with use of the verb *create* in the past simple. There is a point beyond which what the thing that is being created will be completed, which means that there is a boundary implied in this situation. Example (20) talks about someone's misadventure and explains how a succession of events has made someone's trip terrible. Sequences of actions are typically analysed as bounded because they include beginning, middle and end; it thus the discourse which imposes boundaries. Moreover, the verb *pull over* itself implies a logical boundary: once the driver has pulled over, the vehicle stops and so does the action, which cannot continue further. Then, example (21) is representative of an unbounded event. The situation is about some traffic in prison, which is apparently still ongoing so that people want to find a way to stop it. The verb, used in the form of a gerund, refers to a situation that is ongoing and the logical boundary is thus not mentioned. Example (22) uses the verb *kill* in the present simple, this verb would normally require a bounded analysis – i.e. when someone is killed, the act of killing cannot go any further – but the situation implies that this event is regular and repeated. Terrorists did not kill on a single occasion but repeatedly attack innocent people and consequently no boundary to this event can be identified. Then, example (23) shows an unbounded event too but this time with the use of the state verb *have* in the past simple. Although simple tenses are usually bounded, because they imply beginning, middle and end, here the situation is one which implies an ongoing event, placed in the past. It is about someone who has to show that he possesses the necessary competences to do a certain job. The fact of demonstrating certain abilities is not something that is supposed to stop at one point; it should rather logically go on so that this event is interpreted as unbounded.

(19) And they fused with African music and created **something** which only could have happened in America. (WBO)

(20) Everything went wrong: The bellboy was late in getting us the car, I took a wrong turn and we got lost in the mountains, I had to pull **somebody** over by

forcing his car off the road to get directions – and then, after I finally got back on the highway, I developed a flat. (WBO)

(21) There's got to be way to keep them from funnelling this **stuff** out of prisons. (WBO)

(22) We are striking back at terrorists who kill innocent **people**. (WBO)

(23) It was White's first real chance to prove to constituents at Microsoft Corp. that he had the **stuff** to represent their interests in Congress. (WBO)

Interestingly, the distribution of bounded and unbounded events does not strikingly vary across the individuation variables. Table 3 summarizes the results and testifies to a slight majority of bounded events, in 62.92% of all the analysed instances. In terms of animacy, no important difference is to be noticed between the results for human and inanimate object-participants. The semantic class does not seem to have any impact on the aspectual nature of the event either, since *people* shows the second highest percentage among human agents whereas *stuff* only presents the lowest percentage of the three inanimate agents. The assertiveness distinction is most relevant to human object participants, as the share of bounded elements for *someone* and *somebody* is about 10% higher than for *anyone* and *anybody*. Finally, we can say that the low values of aspect that were predicted because of the low or non-individuation of the object-participants are not corroborated at all.

Table 3: Distribution of the aspect features for each O-participant

	bounded		unbounded		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%		
HUMAN	**394**	**65,67%**	**206**	**34.33%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	51	51.00%	49	49.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	66	66.00%	34	34.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	140	70.00%	60	30.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	59	59.00%	41	41.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	78	78.00%	22	22.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**361**	**60.17%**	**239**	**39.83%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	96	64.00%	54	36.00%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	99	66.00%	51	34.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	166	55.33%	134	44.67%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**755**	**62.92%**	**445**	**37.08%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.4. Punctuality

Table 4 below shows the distribution of the punctuality features for each object-participant studied and reveals that a very limited set of instances can actually be qualified as punctual, i.e. only 15%, "with no obvious transitional phase between inception and completion" (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252). The few verbs whose actions happen in a very short period of time are among others: *discover, find, kill, hit, shoot, meet*, etc. as illustrated in examples (24), (25) and (26) below. We can indeed assume that people near a bomb die as soon as it explodes, that when a bullet reaches someone, it also happens in less than a second and that even if the searching in example (26) might take time, the act of finding in itself is something quite sudden. Next to these very scarce instances, a great number of non-punctual events were identified, with *do*, *have*, *know*, *say* and *see* as the most frequent verbs. Two of them are illustrated in examples (27) and (28). In example (27), the extraordinary quality that qualifies the girl is something that lasts in time, not just something temporary. Similarly, the knowledge that the guru in example (28)

exhibits, is something he has acquired it through time and he will probably try to remember it in the future so it is certainly not something fleeting either.

(24) In May, triple suicide bombings of residential compounds in the Saudi Capital killed 35 **people** including Americans. (WBO)

(25) "D-did I hit **anybody**?" he wavered. "I was shooting rats and--and I didn't you two--honest!" (WBO)

(26) And if you're not willing to help me, I'll find **somebody** who will. (WBO)

(27) She has **something** out of the ordinary, all right, something precious. (WBO)

(28) The barbecue guru knows his **stuff** and is eager to share his information. (WBO)

With regard to the distribution of the punctuality features for each type of lemmas, Table 4 shows that although non-punctual events occur in 85.00% of instances and thus forms the majority, the distribution between punctual and non-punctual exhibits more variation with human object-participants than with inanimate ones. In fact, inanimate objects count only 8.33% of punctual events whereas they are more than twice as numerous with human objects; they amount to 22.67%. In terms of lexical status no specific trend is to be noticed either for nominal or pronominal forms. No difference is observed either in terms of assertiveness, as is visible in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of the punctuality features for each O-participant

	punctual		non-punctual		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%		
HUMAN	**131**	**21.83%**	**469**	**78.17%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	23	23.00%	77	77.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	18	18.00%	82	82.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	44	22.00%	156	78.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	27	27.00%	73	73.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	19	19.00%	81	81.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**49**	**8.17%**	**551**	**91.83%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	13	8.67%	137	91.33%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	12	8.00%	138	92.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	24	8.00%	276	92.00%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**180**	**15.00%**	**1020**	**85.00%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.5. Agency

The investigation of the agency-parameter shows that the great majority, i.e. 88.58%, of corpus instances exhibits a human agent, as the one illustrated in (29). As shown in Table 5 and in examples (30) and (31), this agent is sometimes implied rather than explicitly given, resulting in a clause with only one overtly expressed participant. In example (30) the construction is part of a purposive clause, which does not make use of the agent. Example (31) illustrates an imperative clause which consequently does not mention the agent but we can assume that this agent is the addressee, either the hearer or the reader. In addition, 4 agents out of 1200 were coded as animate because they were animals, such as a dog in (32). The agent of the construction could also be an inanimate agent, which was the case in 12.33% of the hits (as illustrated example (33)). Finally, a few inanimate entities have been coded as human agents because they actually instantiate metonymies, as in example (34), in which the term *companies* actually refers to their bosses.

(29) Did he know **anybody** anywhere else? (WBO)

(30) Homework: Change the story to bring out **something** new you want in real life (…). (WBO)

(31) Follow the right path and don't follow **people** who follow their whims. (WBO)

(32) About 8 p.m. a search dog alerted its handler that it had found **something**, Mr. Piringer said, adding that rescuers hoped it was the missing worker. (WBO)

(33) Electrons would do the work instead, at speeds that surpassed **anything** the human eye could perceive. (WBO)

(34) Many Taiwanese companies have a policy of not hiring **anyone** above the age of 45, and so Mr. Hsu's chances of finding a similar, well-paying job are slim. (WBO)

Table 5 shows how the hits are represented in terms of agency as either high in agency, i.e. characteristically human or at least animate, or low in potency, i.e. typically inanimate. In this table, human and animate agents are gathered together but it is worth reminding that, as was explained before, the parameters are also to be perceived as scalar so a human agent is higher in agency than an animate one. Table 6 thus illustrates the distribution of agents high in potency into animate, human and human (implied). When implied, this agent was indeed always human and occurred for instance in an imperative or in an infinitive clause as explained above in Section 4.1.1.

Table 5: Distribution of the agency features for each O-participant

	human/animate		**inanimate**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
HUMAN	**509**	**84.83%**	**91**	**15.17%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	94	94.00%	6	6.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	86	86.00%	14	14.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	137	68.50%	63	31.50%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	97	97.00%	3	3.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	95	95.00%	5	5.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**554**	**92.33 %**	**46**	**7.67%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	135	90.00%	15	10.00%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	133	88.67%	17	11.33%	150	100.00%
STUFF	286	94.23%	14	4.67%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**1063**	**88.58%**	**137**	**11.42%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

Table 6: Distribution of A high in potency

	animate		human		human (implied)		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
HUMAN	**1**	**0.20%**	**415**	**82.50%**	**87**	**17.30%**	**503**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	-	-	88	93.62%	6	6.38%	94	100.00%
ANYONE	-	-	71	85.54%	12	14.46%	83	100.00%
PEOPLE	1	0.74%	95	70.37%	39	28.89%	135	100.00%
SOMEBODY	-	-	87	89.69%	10	10.31%	97	100.00%
SOMEONE	-	-	74	78.72%	20	21.28%	94	100.00%
INANIMATE	**3**	**0.55%**	**500**	**91.07%**	**46**	**8.38%**	**549**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	-	-	129	95.56%	6	4.44%	135	100.00%
SOMETHING	1	0.75%	119	89.47%	13	9.77%	133	100.00%
STUFF	2	0.71%	252	89.68%	27	9.61%	281	100.00%
TOTAL	**4**	**0.38%**	**915**	**86.98%**	**133**	**12.64%**	**1052**	**100.00%**

Concerning the distinction between low-individuated and non-individuated objects, human object-participants are used twice as often with inanimate agents than non-individuated objects. Thus, although both of them are used in great majority with human or animate objects anyway, it seems that the animacy feature could play a role on the nature of the agent, as was predicted by Hopper & Thompson (1980). No important difference can be noticed either between inanimate assertive and non-assertive pronominal forms. However, it seems that the assertiveness feature is slightly more relevant to human object-participants, as the share of human/animate agents is 6% higher for the asserted than for the non-asserted forms. Finally, the investigation of word class permits to notice that the plural noun object-participant *people* shows a substantially higher percentage of occurrences with an inanimate agent than its inanimate counterpart *stuff*, also higher than for each indefinite pronoun.

4.1.1.6. Volitionality

This parameter testifies of the presence or absence of will at the origin of an instigated event. As shown in Table 7, 64.00% of the events investigated are volitional. Examples

(35) and (38) are typical instances of volitional actions. In example (35), the speaker volitionally initiates the event of speaking before being non-volitionally stopped by his/her mother. The action is, on the contrary, non-volitional in example (36), since the verb *discover* refers to an action which cannot be planned but rather happens by chance. Emotions and states of mind such as expressed in (37) are also often non-volitional because the agent has no power on it. In example (37), the woman has not decided not to know anyone but it is the situation that implies this state. Besides, although experiencer verbs form a subtype of stative verb, they can be volitional, the most evident volitional state verb probably being *want*, as in (38). This analysis of experiencer verbs thus agrees with that of Næss (2007), detailed in section 2.1.1.6.

(35) I started to say **something** and Mama put her finger to her lips. (WBO)

(36) Along the way, he discovered **something** about himself, something he may have had all along. (WBO)

(37) When she moves to a new location, she doesn't **know** anyone. (WBO)

(38) "You want like-minded **people** who can communicate easily," he said. (WBO)

Interestingly, Table 7 shows that the two nominal object-participants show very different tendencies: *people* presents the second lowest percentage of volitional events whereas *stuff* has the highest: 74.00% of the constructions with *stuff* are analysed as volitional. Moreover, pronominal forms show percentages almost as high as those of nominal forms so that the word class does not impact on volitionality. The animacy variable does not seem to have an impact on this parameter either; both human and inanimate agents show close percentages of volitional events. Finally, the assertiveness feature of individuation appears to play a role in the classification as the share of volitional events for *somebody* and *someone* (68.5%) is 8% higher than for *anybody* and *anyone* (60.5%). With the inanimate objects *anything* and *something*, this difference even amounts to 17.33%.

Table 7: Distribution of the volitionality features for each O-participant

	volitional		non-volitional		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%		
HUMAN	**368**	**61.33%**	**232**	**38.67%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	65	65.00%	35	35.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	56	56.00%	44	44.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	110	55.00%	90	45.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	65	65.00%	35	35.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	72	72.00%	28	28.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**400**	**66.67%**	**200**	**33.33%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	76	50.67%	74	49.33%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	102	68.00%	48	32.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	222	74.00%	78	26.00%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**768**	**64.00%**	**432**	**36.00%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.7. Affirmation

The results regarding the polarity of the corpus instances again show a majority of features on the high side of the transitivity cline, with 72.92% of affirmative constructions such the one presented in example (39). Constructions scoring lower in transitivity can take two different forms: either the negation resides in the main clause, as in (40), either it resides in a higher clause, as illustrated in (41) and (42). The negation anyway cancels the possibility of transfer typical of transitive constructions (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 253). In example (40), it has as result that the event of fooling does not take place. When the negation lies in a higher clause, the effect is similar: example (41) more or less equals *He is not watching quality stuff* and example (42) could be interpreted as follows: *He has never bribed anybody because he has never tried to*.

(39) It was the first time she, Cooper, and Kate had really done **anything** together as a group besides rituals. (WBO)

(40) Your fancy silverware isn't fooling **anyone**. (WBO)

(41) And it's not like he is watching quality **stuff**. (WBO)

(42) He does business with the city and the state, and he never tries to bribe **anybody**. (WBO)

Table 8 permits to evaluate the impact of each feature of individuation. As far as the animacy variable is concerned, a slightly higher percentage of affirmative sentences can be noticed in constructions with inanimate object-participants than with human object-participants, i.e. they show 75.50% and 70.33% respectively. The word class of the object-participant is however more determining: the share of affirmative constructions with nominal forms is 30% higher than that of pronominal forms. Finally, the assertiveness variable here appears to have a great influence on the parameter of affirmation. The non-assertive pronominal forms *anybody*, *anyone* and *anything* occur in negative constructions in 72.56% of the investigated instances whereas only 7% of the constructions with the assertive *somebody*, *someone* and *something* are used negatively.

Table 8: Distribution of the affirmation features for each O-participant

	affirmative		**negative + negation in higher clause**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
HUMAN	**422**	**70.33%**	**178**	**29.67%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	24	24.00%	76	76.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	27	27.00%	73	73.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	188	94.00%	12	6.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	89	89.00%	11	11.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	94	94.00%	6	6.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**453**	**75.50%**	**113**	**24.50%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	47	31.33%	103	68.67%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	144	96.00%	6	4.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	262	87.33%	38	12.66%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**875**	**72.92%**	**252**	**27.08%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.8. Mode

Mode characterizes events as realis or irrealis. This parameter, just as the punctuality-parameter, scores differently from the others since its results observable Table 9 reveals that they are predominantly situated on the lower side of the transitivity scale. A majority of instances can indeed be interpreted as irrealis because they instantiate negation, as in example (43), or modality, as illustrated in (44), (45) or (46) respectively exhibiting deontic, dynamic and epistemic modal auxiliaries. Similarly, examples of if-conditionals could be found in the corpus sample, as illustrated in (47). They were analysed as irrealis, just as interrogative sentences, e.g. (78). In all these cases the possibility of transfer is thus hindered. Apart from these, 44.17% of the hits were analysed as realis, an example is given in (49). Table 9 sums up all these values.

(43) I've never heard **anyone** scream so loud. (WBO)

(44) Plagued by post-Vietnam stress syndrome and a painful divorce, Steve had to do **something** to release his violent anger. (WBO)

(45) "When you get to my age, you think you can do **anything**," he said with a laugh. (WBO)

(46) Raya's family and friends denied that he was a gang member but said he may have known **people** who were. (WBO)

(47) If Cocco calls **someone** who doesn't have internet phone service, the call will return to a regular line for the last part of its journey. (WBO)

(48) Is anybody registering this **stuff**? (WBO)

(49) I heard **somebody** moving in there but when I tapped on the door, nobody answered. (WBO)

On the distinction between low-individuated and non-individuated objects, the results do not attest to a correlation between low animacy and low properties of mode. We can however observe specific tendencies regarding assertiveness. Non-asserted object-participants, i.e. *anybody*, *anyone* and *anything*, disregarding their level of individuation, occur in 91.56% of irrealis constructions, which is 40% more than the asserted pronominal forms. This correlation can be explained by the fact that these objects often occur in negative constructions so that they are coded as negative and consequently irrealis. In terms of word class, Table 9 also shows significantly different results: generic

plural or uncount nouns have 66% chance of occurring in a realis construction whereas pronouns only have 28.72%.

Table 9: Distribution of the mode features for each O-participant

	realis		irrealis		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%		
HUMAN	**249**	**41.50%**	**351**	**58.50%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	6	6.00%	94	94.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	12	12.00%	88	88.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	138	69.00%	62	31.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	42	42.00%	58	58.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	51	51.00%	49	49.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**281**	**46.83%**	**319**	**53.17%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	11	7.33%	139	92.67%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	81	54.00%	69	46.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	189	63.00%	111	37.00%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**530**	**44.17%**	**670**	**55.83%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.9. Affectedness of the object

The parameter of affectedness discusses the degree with which the object is affected by the event expressed by the verb. The corpus analysis reveals that totally-affected objects only amount to 34.17% of all the analysed constructions. Example (50) illustrates such a construction in which the object-participant, i.e. *41 people*, has been totally affected by the action initiated by the human agents. In example (51) too, the object is analysed as totally affected. It is interesting to note that the object is part of an interrogative sentence but as it takes the form of a WH-interrogative, it does not question the fact that this event happens but rather the conditions in which it happens. In contrast, example (52) exhibits a non-affected object because it is combined with the verb *see* and the act of seeing does not have any impact on the object being seen. As was already mentioned in Section

2.1.1.9, partially-affected objects were, in the context of this study, analysed as non-affected in order to come up with a binary distinction. It is the reason why a construction such as the one instantiated in example (53) has been analysed as non-affected. Although it could be said the action of portraying has an impact on the person posing, it is actually very low has the person is not much affected by this act, or not as much as in (50) and (51), for instance.

(50) South of Baghdad, meanwhile, troops have arrested 41 **people** in the town of Latifiyeh, including several people suspected of involvement in the killings of seven Spanish operatives last month. (WBO)

(51) When is it appropriate to shame or humiliate **someone** who commits a crime? (WBO)

(52) In past years, rare snowfalls have triggered monumental traffic jams among motorists hoping to see the white **stuff** firsthand. (WBO)

(53) In his Poetics, which you might try if you find Greek tragedy interesting, Aristotle (6) tells us that Sophocles said he **portrayed** people as they ought to be, Euripides portrayed them as they are. (WBO)

Table 10 displays a majority of values on the low side of the transitivity scale, as 66.83% of the objects studied are non-affected. This majority of features low in transitivity is noticeable as well for human objects as for inanimate objects so that the animacy variable does not impact on this parameter. This finding does not support Hopper & Thompson's claim that "an action can be more effectively transferred to a patient which is individuated than to one which is not; thus a definite O is often viewed as more completely affected than an indefinite one" (1980: 253). In terms of word class, however, the results show that the indefinite and generic object forms do not score as low as the pronominal forms. In 56% of the constructions with *people* as object-participant, this object was totally affected and it was also the case in 47.67% of the constructions with *stuff* as object. *Stuff* used as object was thus almost as frequently totally affected than non-affected. Pronominal forms, on the contrary score much lower in terms of affectedness with a mean percentage of 78.08% of non-affected objects. This tendency can be probably explained with the assertiveness results. Assertiveness is indeed a very decisive feature for the affectedness parameter: the non-assertive forms *anybody*, *anyone* and *anything* occur with an overwhelming majority of 92% of non-affected objects whereas their

assertive counterparts *somebody*, *someone* and *something* are accompanied with a non-affected object in 65.78% of the investigated constructions. These results corroborate Næss' claim that indefiniteness of the object triggers a low-affected or non-affected reading (2007: 112). *Anybody*, *anyone* and *anything*, because of their lack of referentiality, thus show the lowest values of affectedness.

Table 10: Distribution of the affectedness features for each O-participant

	O totally affected		**O non-affected**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
HUMAN	**184**	**30.67%**	**416**	**69.33%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	6	6.00%	94	94.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	10	10.00%	90	90.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	112	56.00%	88	44.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	29	29.00%	71	71.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	27	27.00%	73	73.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**214**	**35.67%**	**386**	**64.33%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	11	7.33%	139	92.67%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	60	40.00%	90	60.00%	150	100.00%
STUFF	143	47.67%	157	52.33%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**398**	**33.17%**	**802**	**66.83%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.1.10. Conclusion on the transitivity scores

The aforementioned Tables 1 to 10 have shown that 6 out of the 9 investigated parameters showing variation (thus excluding individuation of the object), score relatively high in transitivity. The only three exceptions are punctuality, mode and affectedness of the object-participant, for which the great majority of constructions exhibits lower scores on the transitivity scale.

Table 11 sums up the results and presents a mean transitivity score for each of the lemma studied. This score was computed as follows: a rating of 1 was associated to each parameter presenting a high value on the scale of transitivity, these numbers were then added up in order to give a score to each instance; these scores were also summed up and

the result was divided by the number of instances analysed to arrive at the mean score per lemma. The score thus varies between 4.19 for the inanimate, non-assertive pronoun *anything* and 5.76 for the human, generic noun *people*. The lowest scores are typical of the non-assertive pronouns *anyone*, *anybody* and *anything* whereas the generic nouns *people* and *stuff* score the highest on the scale of transitivity. Interestingly, the inanimate assertive pronominal object-participant *something* exhibits a mean transitivity score which equals that of the human, generic noun *people*.

Constructions with the non-assertive object-participants *anybody*, *anyone* and *anything* exhibit the lowest mean transitivity scores because they are non-referential and because they score low in affirmation – i.e. they are very often combined with a negated verb – so that they also score low for the mode parameter and they are consequently non-affected. Moreover, all the other object-participants investigated show relatively high transitivity, with all scores above the average 5 so that they can all be classified as transitive.

Table 11: Transitivity score for each object-participant

Animacy	Semantic class	Assertiveness	Lemma	N	Total items	Mean score
human	noun		*people*	1195	200	5.76
	pronoun	assertive	*someone*	569	100	5.63
			somebody	560	100	5.56
		non-assertive	*anyone*	425	100	4.21
			anybody	430	100	4.26
inanimate	noun		*stuff*	1766	300	5.88
	pronoun	assertive	*something*	869	150	5.76
		non-assertive	*anything*	633	150	4.19

To further complement these results, a chi-square test was applied to each feature of individuation in relation to their transitivity scores. It was shown that the results in terms of syntactic class are significant as the *p*-value is 0.009117, far below the 0.05 significance level. The results opposing assertive to non-assertive pronominal forms are also significant with a *p-value* of 0.000347. These tests thus guarantee that the

individuation features of syntactic class and assertiveness have an influence the transitivity scores. However, the chi-square test has demonstrated that the results for the animacy variable are not significant since their *p*-value is 0.503771.

This could imply a hierarchy in terms of individuation features with word class as the most important and determining, followed by assertiveness also playing an important role and finally animacy, which actually has no established impact on the transitivity score of the structures but can nevertheless account for unexpected distributions, for instance with the kinesis-parameter. However, Hopper & Thompson claim that referentiality and definiteness are the most important features (1980: 287) and they do not discuss the property of assertiveness so that its influence cannot support their hypothesis. In that case, there is no reason why their definition of low-individuated objects should account for an overall reduced transitivity score.

To conclude on transitivity parameters, two important observations need to be made. First, it has been observed that the properties of syntactic class and assertiveness, which characterize the parameter of individuation of the object, have an influence the transitivity score. Second, although Hopper & Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis predicts that parameters correlate and that a low score for one parameter also implies a low score for the others (1980: 255), constructions with low-individuated and non-individuated do not show an overall low transitivity score.

4.1.1.11. Results for the extra-parameters

The study of how the supposedly low object-arguments scored for the extra-parameters of premodification of the object-argument revealed interesting tendencies. This parameter exposed unexpected characteristics regarding the plural and uncount nouns *people* and *stuff*. These two nouns are naturally the only two object-participants studied which can be associated with premodifiers such as: definite articles, demonstratives, quantifiers, etc. in 62.60% of the analysed instances. In example (54) *people* is combined with the definite article *the* and a classifier. In (55) *stuff* is associated with a quantifier and an attribute.

(54) It makes the Korean **people** richer, with more to eat, more to spend. (WBO)

(55) I was doing some good **stuff** at the Constitution. (WBO)

A chi-square test was thus applied to both object-participants in relation to the occurrence of a premodifier. These tests were based on the total number of the transitivity

scores per lemma in premodified versus non-premodified object-arguments. The tests have highlighted that the results were significant with a *p*-value so low under the 0.05 that they were not given so that this parameter of premodification can be said to have a great influence on the transitivity score of nominal object-participants.

4.1.2. Correlations between the transitivity parameters

As it had been predicted by Hopper & Thompson and mentioned in Section 2.1.1., the parameters interact with each other and have an impact on each other (1980: 255) so that they are interrelated (1980: 294). This section aims to highlight these correlations.

4.1.2.1. Kinesis and aspect

First, a correlation can be observed between aspect and kinesis, as demonstrated in Table 12, where we observe that actions are typically analysed as bounded, in 72.81% of the analysed constructions and states as unbounded, in 64.17%. Examples (56) and (57) respectively illustrate these tendencies. The structure used in example (56) employs the action verb *invent*, used as a bounded event: once the invention is created, the action is completed and it cannot go on any further. It is also used in the past simple and an action happening on one precise occasion, just as this one, is typical of a bounded event. Conversely, example (57) instantiates an unbounded event with the state verb *imagine*. Such a verb does not contain a logical boundary because it can last for a long time. Moreover, the situation is still ongoing.

(56) For thousands of years, since we invented this **stuff**, people have been saying What is this thing and what does it mean? (WBO)

(57) I can't imagine **anybody** in the country who has carried their team more than he has. (WBO)

Table 12: Correlation between kinesis and aspect

	bounded		**unbounded**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
action	640	72.81%	239	27.19%	879	100.00%
state	115	35.83%	206	64.17%	321	100.00%
Total	**755**	**62.92%**	**445**	**37.08%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

Todorova et al. mention this correlation between the aspectual reading and the lexical aspect of the main verb (2000: 2) but they also claim that "the computation of sentential aspect is influenced by the presence of nominal arguments and temporal sentential modifiers" (2000: 2). Examples (56) and (57) could also be explained in those terms. The fact that the object-participant in example (2) has an indefinite pronominal form, rather than a nominal one, makes it more difficult for the action to be completed so that it is interpreted as unbounded. Besides, the preposition *since* with a temporal meaning also supports the bounded analysis, as it specifies that the action took place, and was completed, on a specific occasion.

4.1.2.2. Kinesis and punctuality

Another correlation can be observed between the kinesis and punctuality features. Table 13 shows that actions can be both punctual and non-punctual, in respectively 20.14% and 79.96%, whereas states are almost never punctual. The very few instances of punctual events conveyed with a stative verb make use of the verbs *glimpse* and *recognize*, which typically happen in a short time, as shown in example (60). Next to these exceptions, example (58) illustrates an action which is punctual and typically happens very suddenly – i.e. one doesn't kill someone for hours. On the contrary, it is visible in example (59) that a state verb such as *love* implies a much longer timespan, since love is an emotion that typically develops and evolves through time.

(58) Insurgents have said they will kill **anyone** within 500 yards of a polling station. (WBO)

(59) And he learned, quietly, that you did not have to love **someone** to be loved back. (WBO)

(60) He couldn't escape the feeling that he had glimpsed **something** in his father when he had been speaking about Roo's mother. (WBO)

Table 13: Correlation between kinesis and punctuality

	punctual		non-punctual		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%		
action	177	20.14%	702	79.86%	879	100.00%
state	3	0.93%	318	99.07%	321	100.00%
Total	**180**	**15.00%**	**1020**	**85.00%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.3. Kinesis and volitionality

Kinesis and volitionality also strongly correlate. 78.04% of the actions are volitional whereas states are predominantly non-volitional, i.e. in 74.45%. These results are visible in Table 14 and supported by the following examples. Example (61) makes use of the action verb *carry* which implies a voluntary participation of the agent. The volitional-character of this action is also reinforced with the explanation of the reason for this carrying, introduced by the preposition *so*. Example (62), then, also instantiates a volitional action instigated by an animate agent. This act of helping is something this agent has to be willing to do. In example (63), however, the agent has no power in what is happening, the man has not decided not to hear anything; it is something imposed by the situation: he is *too far up*. This is also the case in example (64), the two speakers present a common characteristic but it is something they have not decided on, the verb *have* is also typically volitional. Finally, all the examples given here exhibit a human agent, which also has an influence on volitionality, as will be discussed in Section 4.1.2.8.

(61) They carry **stuff** on them -jewelry and all- so they won't be wiped out of a favorite item if their homes are robbed while they're gone. (WBO)

(62) 'PR people guide clients through scary experiences,' one PR veteran told Wired, 'and when you're helping **somebody** through a difficult time, you tend to bond. Sometimes that bonding takes the form of romance.' (WBO)

(63) He was too far up to hear **anything**, but he had seen the large fireball that could only have been a petrol station or one of the natural-gas towers. (WBO)

(64) "I'm handling Jon Dupre's case." "Then we've got **something** in common. I'm prosecuting. Maybe I'll get to even our record." (WBO)

Table 14: Correlation between kinesis and volitionality

	volitional		non-volitional		Total n	Total %
	n	%	n	%		
action	686	78.04%	193	21.96%	879	100.00%
state	82	25.55%	239	74.45%	321	100.00%
Total	**768**	**64.00%**	**432**	**30.00%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.4. Kinesis and affectedness of O

It has just been demonstrated that states, scoring low in terms of kinesis, also score low in terms of volitionality. This section shows that they also present low values of affectedness so that there is also a correlation between kinesis and affectedness. This influence is visible in Table 15. Totally affected object-participants are 44% more recurrent in constructions with an action verb than in constructions with a state verb, in which they only occur in less than 1% of the analysed instances. The only 3 examples where the object of a stative construction is interpreted as totally affected, contain the verb *involve* or the idiom *to have something to eat*, as in (69) which could be reduced to *to eat*, an action Stative verbs do not otherwise have an effect on the object as can be observed in example (65), the thing being loved does not undergo any change of state (Næss 2007: 63). Constructions with active verbs, on the contrary, can be paired with objects being either totally affected or non-affected by the event. In example (66) the object-participant is typically affected by the action undertaken and it can therefore be labelled as patient. In examples (67) and (68), however, the action does not have any effect on the object-participant; in (67) because the lexical aspect of the action verb *imagine* does not imply affectedness on its object and in (68) because of the negation. It will indeed be demonstrated in Section 4.1.2.6 that affectedness of the object is mainly dependent on mode. Besides, it should be reminded again that, as was explained in Section 2.1.1.9, an object scoring really low in terms of affectedness would be coded as non-affected but it does not mean that absolutely no change could be observed on the object-participant.

(65) She says opening a store taught her "that if you really enjoy and love **something**, it shows through your work. (…)" (WBO)

(66) Then I just started **clipping** stuff out, and I just got into Kid Rock, Eminem and Blink-182. (WBO)

(67) "For me, the toughest part is imagining **someone** having to call his wife and kids to tell them daddy's not coming home," Girardi said, crying by the end of the sentence. (WBO)

(68) "I am not stopping **anybody**." (WBO)

(69) When was the last time you had **anything** to eat? (WBO)

Table 15: Correlation between kinesis and affectedness of O

	O totally affected		**O non-affected**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
action	395	44.94%	484	55.06%	879	100.00%
state	3	0.93%	318	99.07%	321	100.00%
Total	**398**	**33.17%**	**802**	**66.83%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.5. Affirmation and mode

Affirmation is a core characteristic of mode as it is one of the features that determine whether a construction is classified as realis or as irrealis. Table 16 attests that in 100% of the negative structures, the negation, either in the main clause or in a higher clause, triggers an irrealis interpretation. The explanation for this phenomenon is quite straightforward: the negation in front of a verb prevents the action or the state from taking place or existing in the real world. Since the event does not happen, it is to be placed in an irrealis world, as is visible in example (70): the act of taking something away from Kerry Wood has never occurred. Affirmative sentences can, in contrast, describe realis as well as irrealis events. The eventual irrealis character should then be assigned to another factor specific to mode, as in (72). Example (71) illustrates an affirmative sentence that gets a realis interpretation. In example (72), the polarity is still affirmative but the situation is irrealis because of the conditional, which challenges the existence of this event.

(70) I'm not taking **anything** away from Kerry Wood. (WBO)

(71) Garet muttered **something** that sounded suspiciously like a curse. (WBO)

(72) Today and tomorrow, Love and the rest of the world will find out if he has got the **stuff** to be the "champion golfer of the year." (WBO)

Table 16: Correlation between affirmation and mode

	realis		**irrealis**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
affirmative	530	60.57%	345	39.43%	878	100.00%
negation in higher clause	-	-	73	100.00%	73	100.00%
negative	-	-	252	100.00%	252	100.00%
Total	**530**	**44.17%**	**770**	**55.83%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.6. Mode and affectedness of O

Section 4.1.2.5 has just demonstrated how the affirmation parameter has an influence on the classification of events as realis or irrealis and Section 4.1.2.7 will show how affirmation and affectedness correlate. This section aims to show that mode also influences affectedness so that an irrealis event is typically non-affected. Table 17 shows that almost all irrealis events, i.e. 99.25%, are conveyed in a construction with a non-affected object-participant. In Section 4.1.1.9 various examples of irrealis features have already been given; examples (73) and (74) below illustrate how these features influence the parameter of affectedness of the object, concentrating on two of the properties that cause an irrealis interpretation. Example (73) presents an event, situated in the future with the epistemic modal *will*, which thus gets an irrealis interpretation. As the event has not happened yet and there is no certainty that it will ever take place, the object-participant is non-affected. Similarly, the main verb in example (74) is combined with the epistemic modal auxiliary *can* so that the action does not take place in the real world, the sentence only conveys that the agent would have the ability to create the event, i.e. to find stuff. Consequently, there is no clue that this event did take place, the object-participant cannot be interpreted as affected either. With regard to the affectedness of the object in realis constructions, 74.15% of their object-participants are totally affected, as in (75) and the occurrence of non-affected object-participants in 25.85% should be assigned to other

parameters of transitivity, such as kinesis, as in (76). In this last example, the object is not affected by the fact of being seen.

(73) Anna Nicole Smith, still wrangling about the estate of her 90-year-old husband: "Next time, I'll marry **somebody** who's already dead." (WBO)

(74) "He could find **stuff** with his eyes shut. (…)" (WBO)

(75) They helped make it more democratic, provided free e-mail, and they continue to do innovative **stuff**. (WBO)

(76) I really enjoy teaching. It's great to see **people** get that gleam in their eye. (WBO)

Table 17: Correlation between mode and affectedness of O

	O totally affected		**O non-affected**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
realis	393	74.15%	137	25.85%	530	100.00%
irrealis	5	0.75%	665	99.25%	670	100.00%
Total	**398**	**34.25%**	**802**	**65.75%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.7. Affirmation and affectedness of O

Affirmation and mode correlate and mode has an influence on affectedness, so that affectedness and affirmation correlate too. This claim has been explained by Næss: "an event which is not instigated and therefore does not take place, cannot either produce an effect on any entity" (2007: 116) and is demonstrated in Table 18: 100% of the negative sentences display a non-affected object-participant. If the verb is negated as in example (77), the object is thus non-affected, which has as result that nobody is hurt, or at least not in the conditions mentioned. In example (78) then, because of the negation in the main clause, the object is non-affected by the situation either: nobody is told anything because the man didn't consider this possibility. It is, however, not always true that a non-affected object results from a negative construction: 54.51% of the affirmative constructions have a non-affected object-argument. As it was explained in Section 4.1.2.6, mode also has an influence on affectedness and a modal auxiliary, for instance, can trigger a non-affected interpretation of the object.

(77) But I don't hurt **people** for fun or for profit. (WBO)

(78) But it didn't occur to him to tell **anybody**. (WBO)

Table 18: Correlation between affirmation and affectedness

	O totally affected		**O non-affected**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
affirmative	398	45.49%	477	54.51%	875	100.00%
negation in higher clause	-	-	73	100.00%	73	100.00%
negative	-	-	252	100.00%	252	100.00%
Total	**398**	**34.17%**	**802**	**65.83%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.8. Volitionality and agency

Section 2.1.1.6 has already underlined that, in order to match Hopper & Thompson's definition of transitivity as a "transferral" (1980: 252), "a volitional verb requires an agentive subject – one that is human, or at least animate" (1980: 286). The data presented in Table 19 consequently shows that actions instigated by inanimate agents, as well as states experienced by these, can never be interpreted as volitional. Non-volitional verbs can however occur with both human and inanimate agents. Examples (79) and (80) aims to illustrate why the actions of inanimate agents, such as a *garden* and an *election*, are always analysed as non-volitional. The agent in example (79) emerges as the result of a personification process through which the garden has been given the ability to instigate actions. However, just as it has been explained in Section 2.1.1.6, Næss (2007) insists on the distinction between instigation and volition and an object or a piece of ground do not have the ability to volitionally decide on something. The inanimate agent in example (80) does not either have the power to give something; there is no volition involved in this event, the action described is the result of the citizens' votes. Finally, Table 19 shows that human agents appear twice more often with volitional verbs than with non-volitional verbs but this is mainly due to the nature of the verb, as was shown in Section 4.1.2.3.

(79) But the garden would not let **anyone** get very far. (WBO)

(80) This may be an election which gives us **something** very usual in history, which is two close presidential elections in a row. (WBO)

Table 19: Correlation between volitionality and agency

	human/animate		inanimate		Total n	Total %
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
volitional	768	100.00%	-	-	768	100.00%
non-volitional	295	68.29%	137	31.71%	432	100.00%
Total	**1063**	**88.58%**	**137**	**11.42%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

4.1.2.9. Conclusion on the correlations

Sections 4.1.2.1 to 4.1.2.8 have successfully highlighted that Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameters correlate and have thus corroborated their Transitivity Hypothesis. However, only the correlations observable in the analysis of the studied set of data have been discussed but it does not mean that correlations not mentioned in this study cannot be illustrated in other sets of data.

4.2. Transitivity and discourse

While the previous sections homed in on how the data analysed scored on Hopper & Thompson's (1980) transitivity parameters and how these parameters correlate, this section is concerned with the discourse grounding properties of the data studied, qualifying instances as either foregrounded or backgrounded. The first part discusses the distribution of each type of discourse among the data and the second concentrates on the correlation with the 10 grammatical transitivity parameters proposed by Hopper & Thompson (1980), as discussed in Section 2.1.2.

4.2.1. Grounding: results

On the one hand, foregrounded bits of discourse, as was explained in Section 2.1.2., refer to those bits of discourse which convey the key piece of information in a paragraph. Because Hopper & Thompson's (1980) definitions of foreground and background clearly lack a proper delineation and concrete examples, this section aims to illustrate this notion with concrete instances and extend this definition in order to make it applicable to other text genres. Examples (81), (82) and (83) instantiate foregrounded bits of discourse. The clauses under evaluation are in bold. The extracts in example (81) and (83) come from a book and that in example (82) from the news.

(81) "Don't say that!" he hissed. "Don't even think it! Founders! I think I preferred you when you wanted to take on the whole world! If you want to get even with Joyhinia, then survive this. No. Not just survive. Damned well flourish. Don't let them defeat you, R ' shiel. **Don't let anybody, ever, defeat you!**" R'shiel was startled by his vehemence. "But I'm scared, Tarja." "You're not afraid of anything, R'shiel. "She looked up at him. He might think her fearless, but there was one thing she was afraid of. She was terrified he would look at her again, the way he had the night she left the (WBO)

(82) Also in support: the Community Financial Services Association, representing about 60 percent of the national payday-advance business, including publicly held Advance America Cash Advance Centers Inc. Opposing: the Illinois Small Loan Association, representing 80 percent of payday lenders. The association says the law would force local owners to eliminate as many as 4,000 jobs.**" The last thing I'm trying to do is put anybody out of**

business," said Tony Colletti, executive vice president of the Community Financial Services Association, which represents about 60 percent of payday lenders nationally. "We're trying to make this work -- we'd like to see a solution in Illinois. " (WBO)

(83) <p/> My autistic relatives had led me to an unwanted mission, trying to understand the most puzzling examples of human behavior and misjudgment. In my childhood I had seen Sumner as unique, incomprehensible, and unchangeable. Involvement in my son's education and exposure to experts had taught me that the problems of autism, though rare, are not unique, not incomprehensible, and not necessarily unchangeable. <p/> **To understand these people I had to abandon all of my assumptions about human intelligence**. I learned that I can't assume anything about another person's frame of mind or ability. The sense of time that we take for granted, like the other five senses, can be radically impaired, or, perhaps, absent. <p/> (WBO)

In example (81) we are in the context of a discussion between Tarja and R'shiel and the analysed clause is in the middle of one of Tarja's answers. Tarja explains to R'shiel how she should be bolder because she apparently seems discouraged and afraid of somebody else. Tarja conclude his encouraging reply with the sentence: *Don't let anybody, ever, defeat you!*. This reply summarizes the whole point of his argument: not only does she have to be more courageous and get over the problem, she also has to rise up again because she should never let anyone beat her. We thus assume that within this character's reply, which is itself foregrounded compared to the description of the character's feelings, this last sentence contains the most important piece of information. Example (82) is an extract from the news, probably a press article. At the beginning of the abstract, we can observe the presentation of a conflict between a support group and an opposing group. After the presentation of the groups, the journalist states the issue that opposes them: a new law will cause a huge dismissal in the local business. After this presentation of the setting, comes the most important bit of information in such a text genre: the new piece of information and what the article wants to point out. It seems that what the journalist wants to convey in this article is one of the opponent's position on the issue at stake. Within the expression of his opinion, this opponent explicitly takes position with regard to this issue and this clearly is foregrounded. Then, example (83) also comes

from a book, probably one concerned with autism. Interestingly, we can get clues of the layout with symbols </*p*> which indicate the beginning of a new paragraph. The analysed sentence is situated after a few sentences which set the scene, i.e. the speaker's previous experiences with autistic people. The analysed sentence itself, states a finding made by the writer about autistic people and this finding is then explained and detailed in the following sentences. That is, the sentence exhibits the central piece of information of that paragraph.

On the other hand, backgrounded portions appear to develop, comment, reinforce or announce a foregrounded portion. This paragraph analyses backgrounded clauses, illustrated in examples (84) and (85), which have books as sources, and example (86), extracted from the news.

(84) "We better hope it isn't too long, though." "Why?" "Water," he said succinctly." This canyon is stone dry. "EVE looked up anxiously as Reno rode back in from his short exploration of the tributary canyon. **The grim line of his mouth told her that he hadn't discovered anything useful**. "Dry," he said. She waited. "And blind," he added. "What?" "It's a dead end." "How far ahead?" "Maybe two miles," Reno said. Eve looked down the narrow wash where Slater's men waited for their quarry. "They need water, too," she pointed out. (WBO)

(85) the courts to be swayed from their rigid adherence to great principles; if remedies for the perceived passing needs of the moment are allowed at the expense of those enduring constitutional doctrines that have preserved our system of ordered liberty throughout the ages. Of those doctrines, none is more fundamental to our government structure itself than the separation of powers--**-with all its inherent tensions, with all of its necessary inability to satisfy all people or all institutions all of the time**, and yet with the relentless and saving force that it generates toward essential compromise and accommodation over the longer term even if not always in the shorter term. Often a price has to be paid in the short term to preserve the principle of separation of powers, and thereby to preserve the basic constitutional balances, in the longer term. (WBO)

(86) I said, "it's more like television than real life. A whodunit. A hard case to solve." "I don't know," Stasko said. "All you've got to do is talk to the right people; someone's got to be in the right mood to talk to you. You really have to gain their trust. **A lot of people out there know stuff they're not giving up**." FBI agents are not like cops. They smile, and talk, and present themselves as nice guys and gals. Meanwhile, they give up nothing. Not even to cops working a murder. They have nicer offices than the SFPD, too. The conference room where I met with Steve Tarchak, on the 13th floor of the federal building, (…) (WBO)

Example (84) deals with a narrative, composed of portions of dialogues and portions of description. The clause under study precisely belongs to this description of the setting and the character's feelings and movements as it explains what the character is deducing from somebody else's face. This clause does not contribute to the development of the story but rather comments on it. It could also easily be deleted, which shows that this clause belongs to the background of the discourse. In example (85), also extracted from a book, the clause under investigation is a part of a prepositional phrase. The passage is a discussion of political doctrines and the clause that is here focussed on, gives more detail on a specific doctrine: the separation of powers. This clause could be omitted as it does not contain any major piece of information but rather gives more comments; this interpretation is supported by the type of punctuation used; clauses between dashes typically contain side information or speaker comments. Finally, in example (86), the analysed sentence is part of a quotation, which is often analysed as foregrounded, but it is nevertheless analysed as part of the background. The sentence investigated here is an explanation, or development, of what has been said before: in order to solve a mystery, one has to gain people's trust and get them to talk. The clause then gives the reason why it is important to get close to people in order to hear their story, i.e. because people won't talk at once, they will first keep secrets that a detective has to acquire with tenacity. The classification of quotations as either foregrounded or backgrounded is thus not clear-cut but can actually vary with the source subcorpus.

In terms of frequency across the data, Table 20 shows that no major tendency is to be observed although foregrounded clauses are 10% more frequent than backgrounded clauses. Looking at each lemma individually, we can observe that foregrounded clauses

always make up the majority. The non-assertive pronominal forms *anybody*, *anyone* and *anything* do not differ in results with their assertive counterparts *somebody*, *someone* and *something*. Similarly, the animacy variable does not seem to play a role in the discourse classification of the structures containing them. Table 20 does not permit to observe any influence of the syntactic form of the object-participant either.

Table 20: Grounding results for each O-participants

	foregrounded		**backgrounded**		**Total n**	**Total %**
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
HUMAN	**329**	**54.83%**	**271**	**45.17%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYBODY	56	56.00%	44	44.00%	100	100.00%
ANYONE	59	59.00%	41	41.00%	100	100.00%
PEOPLE	108	54.00%	92	46.00%	200	100.00%
SOMEBODY	53	53.00%	47	47.00%	100	100.00%
SOMEONE	53	53.00%	47	47.00%	100	100.00%
INANIMATE	**340**	**56.67%**	**260**	**43.33%**	**600**	**100.00%**
ANYTHING	82	54.67%	68	45.33%	150	100.00%
SOMETHING	92	61.33%	58	38.67%	150	100.00%
STUFF	166	55.33%	134	44.67%	300	100.00%
TOTAL	**669**	**55.75%**	**531**	**44.25%**	**1200**	**100.00%**

As was explained in Section 2.1.2., Hopper & Thompson's hypothesis on the relation between transitivity and discourse (1980: 280) suggests that a foregrounded clause would typically score high in transitivity for each or the majority of the ten parameters they developed. On the contrary, a construction which scores low in transitivity for the parameters would presumably appear in the background. As all of the instances investigated show reduced transitivity at least on the parameter of individuation of the object-participant, it could be expected that we find the structures analysed more frequently in backgrounded portions of discourse than in foregrounded ones. However, Table 21 shows that this is not conspicuously the case. This is confirmed by chi-square tests run for each of the lemmas studied, whose p-values – all above the 0.05 level of

significance – are presented in Table 21. These tests are based on the total number of transitivity scores per lemma in backgrounded versus foregrounded discourse. The results thus show that no correlation between both types of discourse and the transitivity score can be observed in the analysis of our set of data. In what follows, we break the general observations down per parameter.

Table 21: Chi-square results on the distribution of discourse types for each O-participant

O-participant	p-value
ANYBODY	0.773023
ANYONE	0.773023
PEOPLE	0.601076
SOMEBODY	0.876706
SOMEONE	0.905693
SOMETHING	0.967196
ANYTHING	0.520733
STUFF	0.803775

4.2.2. Grounding and transitivity parameters

Beginning with the participants-parameter, Table 22 permits to notice that the clear majority of structures containing more than one participant, which has already been observed in Section 4.1.1.1., is noticeable in both types of discourse. Disregarding the type of discourse, high scores of transitivity are indeed observable for this parameter. These results thus do not support Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis.

Table 22: Grounding and participants

	more than one	one	TOTAL
foregrounded	86.40%	13.60%	100.00%
backgrounded	91.71%	8.29%	100.00%
TOTAL	**88.75%**	**11.25%**	**100.00%**

Then, looking at the results of kinesis in comparison with those of grounding, the results given in Table 23 first support the hypothesis of a strong correlation between action and foregrounded clauses, which typically convey events and actions, but this high score of transitivity is also observed for backgrounded clauses.

Table 23: Grounding and kinesis

	action	**state**	**TOTAL**
foregrounded	71.94%	28.06%	100.00%
backgrounded	74.29%	25.71%	100.00%
TOTAL	**73.25%**	**26.75%**	**100.00%**

The same observation can be made with regard to aspect. According to Hopper & Thompson, there should be a correlation between bounded events and foregrounded discourse because the latter usually convey a sequence of events so that each one is bounded by the preceding (1980: 286). Both foregrounded and backgrounded portions of discourse actually instantiate a high level of transitivity concerning this parameter, as is visible in Table 24. Foregrounded portions of discourse do not exhibit bounded events only and conversely the background is not typified by a majority of unbounded events either. It is noticeable, specifically for this parameter, that Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis on the role of grounding relies too much on a typically narrative subcorpus, which is not the only represented subcorpus related on in this study.

Table 24: Grounding and aspect

	bounded	**unbounded**	**TOTAL**
foregrounded	60.64%	39.36%	100.00%
backgrounded	64.72%	35.28%	100.00%
TOTAL	**62.92%**	**37.08%**	**100.00%**

The results for the punctuality-parameter, presented in Table 25, are even more interesting than the preceding since the values show the opposite of what was announced by Hopper & Thompson. Foregrounded passages indeed describe a large majority, i.e. 85.12% of non-punctual events. This preponderance of low transitivity score in 85% is

nevertheless also noticeable for backgrounded portions of discourse, as shown in Table 25. The hypothesis is thus again not borne out.

Table 25: Grounding and punctuality

	punctual	**non-punctual**	**TOTAL**
foregrounded	14.88%	85.12%	100.00%
backgrounded	15.10%	84.90%	100.00%
TOTAL	**15.00%**	**85.00%**	**100.00%**

With the regard to the volitionality-parameter, no strict one-way correlation can be found either between volitionally initiated events and foregrounded clauses. Again, backgrounded parts of the discourse instantiate a lot of volitional verbs, i.e. 66.37%, as visible in Table 26. Similarly, 38.98% of foregrounded clauses contain a non-volitional verb. This deconstructs the hypothesis according to which the foreground conveys events initiated by a deliberate agent.

Table 26: Grounding and volitionality

	volitional	**non-volitional**	**TOTAL**
foregrounded	61.02%	38.98%	100.00%
backgrounded	66.37%	33.63%	100.00%
TOTAL	**64.00%**	**36.00%**	**100.00%**

According to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis, affirmative clauses are typical of the foreground because they convey real, existing facts. Yet, Table 27 shows that they also appear in an important number of backgrounded clauses, i.e. in 73.54% of them. Negative clauses, put together with the ones containing negation in a higher clause are also almost equally present in the foreground and in the background. No correlation can consequently be drawn between transitivity and discourse on the basis of this parameter.

Table 27: Grounding and affirmation

	affirmative	negative + negation in higher clause	TOTAL
foregrounded	72.13%	27.87%	100.00%
backgrounded	73.54%	26.46%	100.00%
TOTAL	**72.92%**	**27.08%**	**100.00%**

The analysis of the distribution of the mode-feature in both types of discourse also goes against the hypothesis of a possible correlation. Not only do 54.05% of foregrounded clauses instantiate an irrealis event, typically low in transitivity, but realis events are also numerous among backgrounded portions of discourse, they are observable in 42.75% of them. Table 28 sums up these results.

Table 28: Grounding and mode

	realis	irrealis	TOTAL
foregrounded	45.95%	54.05%	100.00%
backgrounded	42.75%	57.25%	100.00%
TOTAL	**44.17%**	**55.87%**	**100.00%**

Just as for the preceding results, Table 29 also proves that affectedness varies disregarding the type of discourse. 66.48% of foregrounded clauses indeed illustrate a non-affected object, which goes against Hopper & Thompson's (1980) predictions. Moreover, these non-affected object are as numerous in foregrounded portions of discourse.

Table 29: Grounding and affectedness

	O totally affected	O non-affected	TOTAL
foregrounded	33.52%	66.48%	100.00%
backgrounded	32.88%	67.12%	100.00%
TOTAL	**33.17%**	**66.83%**	**100.00%**

Finally, Hopper & Thompson (1980) have predicted that foregrounded clauses typically imply the presence of a human agent. Still, we can notice in Table 30 that human agents are even slightly more numerous in backgrounded clauses. Human agents are actually highly represented in both types of discourse, as shown in Table 30: 88.14% of foregrounded clauses are structures with a human agent and it is also the case for 88.94% of backgrounded clauses. Grounding and agency do not appear to correlate.

Table 30: Grounding and agency

	human/animate	**inanimate**	**TOTAL**
foregrounded	88.14%	11.86%	100.00%
backgrounded	88.94%	11.06%	100.00%
TOTAL	**88.58%**	**11.42%**	**100.00%**

4.2.3. Conclusion on the relation between transitivity and discourse

Hopper & Thompson's (1980) second main claim was that grounding should serve as unitary principle since there is a correlation between the degree of transitivity of a construction and the type of discourse in which it occurs. However, Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 have explained how the corpus data that have been investigated do not support Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis. This suggests that either the hypothesis cannot be applied to the English language or that their definition of the types of grounding is inadequate. Section 2.1.2 had already mentioned Cooreman's (1994) claim that the definition is not satisfactorily applicable to text genres other than narratives. Yet these others genres, for instance extracts from the press or transcripts of spoken material, are part of the corpus used for this study. Although this definition had been partially reworked in the context of this study in order to fit these other genres, it still does not achieve to concur with the transitivity features.

4.3. Object demotion and antipassive constructions

The discussion of antipassive constructions in Section 2.2 has permitted to introduce Cooreman's (1994), Sanso's (2017) and Lambert et al.'s (2017) claim and to show that structures featuring generic or indefinite object-arguments can often be interpreted as functionally antipassive constructions. This section aims to show how this finding can be applied to our data. The first part discusses how the constructions studied show object-demotion and other characteristics that can be attributed to antipassives. The second part discusses how the study reinforce Lambert et al.'s claim.

4.3.1. Analysis of the results in the light of the existing literature

First, Section 2.1.1.10 has demonstrated how the investigated items – *people* and *stuff* as generic, plural and uncount nouns and *someone*, *anyone*, *somebody*, *anybody*, *something*, *anything* as indefinite pronouns – are characterized with low individuation. This low score should thus be interpreted as a first clue of the interpretation as antipassive since it is at the basis of Cooreman's (1994), Sanso's (2017) and Lambert et al.'s (2017) claim. Indeed, although English does not have a traditional antipassive structure in the form of an intransitive clause, Cooreman explains how "the occurrence of an antipassive in many languages correlates with a low degree of identifiablity [*sic*] of the O in the proposition" (Cooreman 1994: 52). This identifiability feature to which Cooreman (1994) refers is an equivalent of the individuation parameter. As these objects are low in individuation, or identifiability, they have more chances to be subject to object-demotion, which is the primary function of antipassive constructions (Sanso 2017: 176).

Then, Hopper & Thompson's (1980) parameter of affectedness of the object is another parameter suggesting object-demotion in the transitive structures analysed. It has been shown in Table 10 that this parameter is characterized with low transitivity values as 66.83% of the object-participants investigated, were analysed as non-affected. Since this parameter is the one that showed the greater number of instances scoring low in transitivity and also because this parameter is object-related, it seems that this is the most determining factor for the process of object-demotion. Antipassive constructions indeed show a similar tendency:

> (…) when the antipassive deletes the O, there is obviously no O for which an effect can be indicated. A similar argument can be made for Os in antipassives

> which have a low degree of identifiability. Indeed, when the O is hard to identify because it is indefinite, or generic, or non-referential, then it necessarily follows that the effect on the O stemming from A'S activity is equally hard to identify. The reason for this is simply that we don't know exactly which O to check for the effect implied by the particular verb used. (Cooreman 1994: 70)

Although Cooreman mentions as one of her findings a possible correlation between antipassives and agents low in potency, she admits herself that this correlation is most probably not relevant (1994: 72). The position argued for in this study is, on the contrary, that object-demotion gives more importance to the other participant in the construction, i.e. the agent. This claim is also supported by the fact that 88.58% of the agents in the constructions investigated were human or animate agents, as shown in Table 5. Example (87) illustrates object-demotion because the emphasis is not on the object, the patient is not important because it is not a definite entity. It could easily be deleted from the sentence: *He killed*. The emphasis is imputable to the agent/subject.

(87) "He's a knife artist," he said, "and he already killed **somebody** once and got away with it." (WBO)

The example also illustrates how antipassives correlate with low values on the participants-parameter. The antipassive construction indeed undergoes a valency-decreasing mechanism (Sanso 2017: 201): if the object is demoted, the valency of the clause, which was originally of two participants – i.e. agent and patient, is reduced to one participant only: the subject. However, this study has investigated constructions with generic and indefinite object-arguments, which are thus overtly expressed so that the results shown in Table 1, section 4.1.1.1, do not illustrate this valency-reducing mechanism. Again, the idea is that such object-participants could also be deleted or that they at least do not contain the topic of the sentence.

Besides, as it was already mentioned in Section 2.2, Cooreman (1994) also suggested correlations between the antipassive construction and low values for the aspect and punctuality parameters. Her results were, however, based on her analysis of ergative languages. This corpus study has shown that these findings could also be partially applied to the English language. The minority of unbounded events (they only represent 37% of

the analysed instances, as visible in Table 3) only partially supports this hypothesis. Table 4, on the contrary, exhibits results in favour of Cooreman's hypothesis (1994: 57) as it shows that 85% of the events studied could be analysed as non-punctual.

With regard to a possible correlation between antipassive constructions and grounding, the data show that Cooreman's hypothesis (1994: 67) cannot be corroborated. The constructions with indefinite or generic object-arguments are not more recurrent in backgrounded portions of discourse. However, Section 4.2.3 has demonstrated that the grounding parameter itself has no influence on the set of data studied. Moreover, Cooreman (1994) also mentions in her study that backgrounding is not an essential property of antipassive constructions as this tendency is not observable in all the languages of her sample (Cooreman 1994: 70).

Finally, Lambert et al. had suggested that indefinite or generic object-arguments "merely function as filler elements used to satisfy the argument-structure requirements imposed by the verb" (2017: 1). This observation is only partially corroborated by our set of data. Section 4.1.1.11 has highlighted the high percentage of premodified nominal generic object-participant and the influence of this premodification on the transitivity score. Consequently, it seems that these objects cannot be reduced to mere "filler elements" (Lambert et al. 2017: 1).

4.3.2. Conclusion on antipassive constructions

To sum up, this section aimed to demonstrate that constructions with the indefinite and generic object-arguments investigated in this corpus study – i.e. *people*, *stuff*, *someone*, *anyone*, *somebody*, *anybody*, *something* and *anything* – exhibit the process of object-demotion and can consequently be analysed as antipassives.

These constructions indeed present characteristics that are typical of antipassives: a lower degree of transitivity for the object-related parameters, i.e. individuation of the object and affectedness of the object. Because the selection of the data required that the investigated lemmas appeared in object-position, we cannot observe a tendency of object-deletion as it can be the case in traditional antipassive constructions in other languages, mainly ergative, and the object cannot appear as a peripheral argument either. With regard to the qualification of antipassives as valency-decreasing mechanisms, the set of data

shows that the verb also remains transitive (this was prerequisite) but the valency-marking on the verb is definitely reduced.

Finally, the results also show support to Lambert et.al. in the sense that such functionally antipassive constructions "won't necessarily develop into canonical antipassive constructions over time" (2017: 1) and that the process will probably never end with a complete deletion of the generic or indefinite object-arguments.

5. CONCLUSION

This corpus study has investigated transitive structures with indefinite or generic object-arguments. On the one hand, it aimed to show how these object-arguments scored according to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) transitivity parameters in order to investigate the role of the individuation-parameter. On the other hand, it intended to highlight the characteristics that such constructions with indefinite or generic object-arguments share with antipassives constructions in order to develop Lambert et al.'s (2017) claim on the emergence of a new form of functionally antipassive constructions in English.

As far as Hopper & Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis is concerned, the data have demonstrated that a number of the transitivity parameters correlate, with kinesis and mode as probably the most influential. However, although the object-participants investigated were either low-individuated or non-individuated and consequently scored low for the individuation-parameter, constructions with indefinite or generic object-arguments showed relatively high transitivity scores, except for *anyone*, *anybody* and *anything*. The results suggest that the individuation-parameter is not as important as the other since it does not induce an overall reduced transitivity score. As it was also demonstrated by Lambert et al. (2017), the reliability of this parameter can thus be questioned and this study claims that it should be left out, or replaced.

With regard to the correlation between transitivity and grounding in discourse, the results of the corpus analysis have lent no support to Hopper & Thompson's (1980) hypothesis. It has been demonstrated that the transitivity score of a construction has no influence on the type of discourse in which it occurs.

Finally, transitive structures with indefinite or generic object-arguments share characteristics with antipassive constructions, the most important being the feature of object demotion and the low degrees of transitivity for the object-related parameters.

To conclude, this study has demonstrated that Hopper & Thompson's (1980) Transitivity Hypothesis can be applied to the English language but that other parameters, which would replace the individuation-parameter, should be added to the nine others. New parameters analysing the nature of the object-participant are especially needed. This study has shown that the parameter which investigate the premodification of the object, for instance, is of great influence and it should thus be taken into account for the computation of the transitivity score.

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