

**THE ROLE OF MARKEDNESS IN THE
ACTUATION AND ACTUALIZATION OF LINGUISTIC CHANGE**

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0. **Introduction**

Although the notion of 'actuation' has been recognized as a problem in historical linguistics since the first use of this term in Weinreich, Labov & Herzog's seminal article (1968), only few attempts have been made to come to grips with it. The same holds true for the notion of markedness in a way—since many linguists make use of the term, but only very few ever explore the depths of this Prague school concept (for an overview, see Andersen 1989, 2001; for a notable exception, see Battistella 1996). The present paper will be on the daring side, as it is an attempt to combine the two concepts into a framework for the understanding of language change in such a way that markedness as a cognitive dimension is related to both the actuation and the actualization of new linguistic forms. It will be argued that markedness on a matrix level is applicable to both the signifiant and the signifié. Both are linked, in many cases, through simple referential meaning. In the case of naturally marked signifiants this leads to a linguistic environment where new items can be introduced through a process called Markedness Agreement. In other words, if the signifiant is (linguistically) marked on the level of form, the signifié also tends to be (cognitively) marked, and vice versa. The ontological status of the entity referred to must therefore also be taken into account (cf. Maes 1997 and Palmer & Woodman 1998 for a similar problem). There are, it seems, certain designated entry points for such innovations, and, accordingly, such actuations of linguistic change. Actuation, i.e. real change in the linguistic system, however, only occurs when the marked status of both signifiant and signifié are somewhat reduced to a 'normal' level, and the innovation is actualized in different contexts, styles, and so on. Both concepts, actuation and actualization, though different in terms and content, seem inextricably entwined and will be regarded as inseparable in the present paper.

These ideas will be exemplified from a detailed study of the development of the system of English relative particles. In particular, the first developments of the *wh*-series will be scrutinized from this point of view. Further reference will be made to similar developments of *do*-periphrasis and genitive case markers. In all of these instances, we find a referentially highly marked context that triggers (in a somewhat iconic way) the use of marked syntactic structures.

1. *Markedness agreement: agreement in what?*

Markedness Agreement as a concept has been proposed by Andersen (2001). He claims that "in normal agreement in case, number or gender, the rules produce syntagms that are homogeneous in markedness and conform to the Principle of Markedness Agreement" (26). According to this principle, drawn from observations of ritual behavior, text structures, lexical, grammatical, and phonological parallelisms, grounding structures of narrative discourse, morphosyntax, morphophonology, and phonology, marked items tend to occur in marked environments, while unmarked ones tend to occur in unmarked contexts. For instance, nasality is commonly regarded as marked, and in American English nasal vowels typically occur before nasal consonants, while nonnasal vowels occur elsewhere (before nonnasal consonants and not before consonants). This kind of allophonic variation has also been termed Markedness Assimilation, as a hitherto unspecified (vowel) phoneme is either marked or unmarked depending on context, i.e. it is assimilated to a given context. In morphosyntax the matter is more difficult, naturally, as correlates of allophones are hard to find. The expectation, however, is that in a marked environment, a marked linguistic form can be found.

What is a marked environment, then? To illustrate this problem, a few phenomena from English syntax will be adduced. First, consider subject-verb inversion. This, no doubt, can be classified as a marked structure. But this structure is not only triggered by some marked linguistic environment (such as introductory neg-adverb structures: "Not only did I..."), but also by marked communicative needs. With inverted structures, the speaker wants to convey some marked, salient meaning. Take the by now classic "Into the room came Chomsky". Here, we do not find a marked linguistic environment—it is the speaker's point of view, the 'extra meaning element' that is marked, and which triggers the inverted structure. Schmidt (1980) adduces similar cases from Old English, where the 'semantic content' of the relevant passages triggers otherwise unexpected inversions. In (1) it may be the author's wish to emphasize the unexpectedness of Wulfheard's death just at such a moment, just as Present-day English cleft sentences are often used to express the unexpected (cf. Dorgeloh 1997), as in (2).

(1) [just when he was having such a great success] *By geara forþferde Wulfheard* "that year died Wulfheard" (ASC A837, quoted from Schmidt 1980:127)

(2) *It was Clinton who addressed the topic first, not Schröder.*

Another example comes from the English case marking system. The *s*-genitive of 'the Queen's English' can probably be interpreted, nowadays, as more marked than the prepositional *of*-genitive of 'the people's English'. Without going into too much detail: the *s*-genitive is more restricted in its use and can be interpreted as more costly in terms of processing effort in some constructions. Compare (3.a) and (3.b).

- (3) a. *the man that I met yesterday, but who disappeared in the crowd's hat*
 b. *the hat of the man that I met yesterday, but who disappeared in the crowd*

While (3.a) leaves the addressee of the utterance (whether hearer or reader) at sea for the whole of three clauses—Is it an *s*-genitive construction or a normal NP? Which is the head? Which is the dependent?—(3.b) is quite transparent. Here the head is clause initial and followed by the very complex (i.e. 'heavy') modifying NP. The *s*-genitive, however, tends to be used with [+animate] or [+human] possessors, so that we have a conflict of interest in the realm of syntax and semantics. There are more complex structures and complex environmental conditions that not only involve such features as animacy, but also [\pm proper noun], [\pm clause], etc. that come into play. It can be argued that we are experiencing a shift in the ranking of these constraints at the moment. While [+human] and [+animate], both simple semantic features, have been prominent triggers of the *s*-genitive so far, grammatical weight seems to be gaining in importance, that is, if the resulting sentence is too complex to process, [+human] is overruled by [+clause], and the *of*-genitive is used instead (note similar tendencies in Heavy Argument Shift; cf. Wasow 1997). In other words, before we postulate a driving force of (referential or semantic) markedness in language change we need to keep in mind that in many cases a multitude of factors have to be considered, and that syntax often overrides semantics. With this caveat in mind we will provide an analysis of the influence of marked referents, i.e. of the ontological status of the signifié, in the development of English relative particles.

2. The problem

The Present-day English system of standard relative markers (*that*, *which*, *who*, *whose*, *whom*, \emptyset) has its origin in Middle English. The Old English relativizers *þe* and *se* were abandoned, and *þat*, the nominative-accusative singular neuter form of *se*, was generalized for all genders and cases and so took over as the sole relative marker in the middle of the thirteenth century (Fischer 1992:296). *Which*, *who*, *whose*, and *whom* were in principle also available in the linguistic system from the beginning of the Middle English period onwards, but each of these relative particles has a very interesting history of its own. Apart from their differences in frequency, each of these items developed at different times and also developed in relation to the complex system of possible antecedents that we know today. *Who*, for instance, took the longest to be fully introduced into the linguistic system—quite unexpectedly, considering Keenan & Comrie's Accessibility Hierarchy (1977:66), according to which subject relativization in general is realized earlier than the relativization of direct objects, indirect objects, etc. However, this implicational hierarchy cannot be utilized to its full extent as the new *wh*-series in Middle English does not represent a primary, but only a secondary relativization strategy. Nevertheless, it can be argued that even unexpected secondary strategies that run counter to the Accessibility Hierarchy serve to delimit the explanatory power of Keenan & Comrie's theory (96).

The present paper will investigate the origin and early history of the individual relative particles in detail, with special focus on the status of markedness that can be ascribed to them (Romaine 1982). It will be argued that the *wh*-series originated in the need to represent a clearly marked referential object (antecedent) in a somewhat iconic way, through the mechanism referred to above as Markedness Agreement (Andersen 2001).

This development is interesting for a theory of actuation and actualization insofar as it shows that new forms can originate (be actuated) in (syntactically, cognitively, socially or otherwise) salient, marked contexts, and that new forms can be gradually actualized in the linguistic system as their markedness declines.

3. A short history of English relative particles

"[I]n the thirteenth century *that* stood practically alone as a relativiser" (Fischer 1992:296; for a discussion of the origin of *that*, see Traugott 1972:153). The Old English relativization strategies *se* (the inflected demonstrative), *þe* (an uninflected particle), or a combination of both were no longer popular, and the *wh*-series had not yet been fully introduced. *That* was subject to an "extensive generalization" (Traugott 1972:152) and was used uniformly for all cases,

genders, and types of antecedents; cf. (4), where *that* is used for the [+sing] [+fem] [+nom] antecedent *þi sistor*.

- (4) [...] *þi sistor, þat bispekez þi deth, to quelle þe heo hath ipouzt*
 "your sister, who is planning your death, to kill you she has thought of" (Saint Kenhelm, ca. 1300)

The *wh*-series is an exaptation of some Old English interrogative pronouns and indefinites, *hwæt*, *hwylc*, *hwa*, etc. (Traugott 1972:153). *Which* was probably the first of these to be fully introduced (first OED citation 1175), followed by *whom* (1175) and *whose* (Montgomery 1989:115). *Who* is the one that took the longest (1426, cf. Rydén 1983:126) and "one of the cruxes in the history of English syntax is the long delay in the emergence of anaphoric relative *who*" (ibid.). It occurred first in epistolary use, viz. in fixed letter-closing formulas, often in wishes for God's blessings or absolution; cf. (5), (6).

- (5) *by the grace of God, how haue you in his blyssid kepyng* (Paston 1452)
 (6) *blissid be Jhesu, who preserue you bothe body and sowle* (Cely 1481/82)

Although *which* can still be found in such formulas at the beginning of the fourteenth century (7), it "steeply decreases towards the end of the century" (Rydén 1983:128).

- (7) *by þe grace of God, which euere haue you in his kepyng* (William Paston I, 1430)

In her extensive study of relative markers in Middle Scots, Romaine (1982) pointed out that the emergence of the *wh*-series as a whole was strongly influenced by stylistic factors. *Wh*-relative pronouns are first found in formal styles and contexts. This is due to two distinct factors: (a) the imitation of Latin patterns (*qui*, *quod*), which were regarded as markers of elaborate style and speech, and (b) the high saliency of these new forms. *Wh*-forms were mainly used in the most salient positions, where they could achieve the greatest effect. In the following, the notion of saliency will be further scrutinized.

It would appear that there are two basic approaches to explicating our notion of 'saliency'. The first of these might be called 'culture-based' or static, the second, 'event-based' or dynamic. To start with the latter, there are degrees of newness, unexpectedness, or surprise value relative to pre-existing contents of

our cognition. The more accruals to a cognitive state are expected, the less marked they are in respect to content. The more candidates for integration into cognition (typically, 'events') are unexpected or run counter to the addressee's presuppositions, the harder they are to integrate in cognition, and the costlier they are in processing time, the more marked they are.

The first-mentioned, static notion is discussed in some detail by Lyons (1977:570–635). The most unmarked context for Lyons is the *ego*, *hic et nunc* situation. It is *ego*, the first-person narrator that seems most natural and unmarked—often characterized by a lack of morphological marking on first-person verbs, the *hic*, the 'here'-grounding of discourse, and the *nunc*, the present moment—again often characterized by verb forms that are morphologically unmarked in the simple present tense. Furthermore, several semantic-pragmatic and cultural factors come into play, the marked features "two or more participants", "volitional", "agent high in potency", or "affirmative" as distinct from the unmarked alternatives "one participant", "nonvolitional", "agent low in potency", and "negative" (Hopper & Thompson 1980). Semantic features such as "proper vs. common noun", "definite vs. indefinite", "concrete vs. abstract" also have to be considered (see Andersen 2001:24–33 for extensive listings of unmarked vs. marked features). The markedness values reflect cognitive complexity and are often represented in linguistic forms. The more *ego*, *hic et nunc* a situation is, the less marked are the linguistic forms used in it. However, any real-life speech situation is marked in one way or another as any real-life speech situation involves the saliency of one or more of its participants. And in any case, a most unmarked situation would have to be defined as such by all its participants.

It might, for instance, be important for the speaker to use the expressive function of language in order to "make the utterance appropriate to his attitude towards, or his emotional involvement in, what he is talking about" (Lyons 1977:583). It can be argued that this is a function that leads to change from above. In such cases the speakers want to convey two things: first, they want to express a particularly affective stance towards the situation or the object referred to, and, secondly, they want to differentiate themselves from those speakers that are not expected to follow this trend. Here language mirrors the real-life situation in a (somewhat abstract) iconic fashion. The object referred to is, at least in the speaker's mind, marked, and has a special ontological status, and thus also receives a marked linguistic form (cf. Maes 1997; Palmer & Woodman 1998). As for the emergence of the *wh*-series in English, this is also confirmed by the fact that these pronouns first occur in a marked style, such as artistic prose and deliberately stylized texts. They were meant to be noticed. According to Andersen, innovative forms tend to co-occur first with universally marked

features, such as [+subordinate], [+pronoun], [+writing], [+formal]. When we take a closer look we find that *who* originated as a relativizer of divine antecedents: whatever the precise semantic features of deities (e.g., + or – animate, + or – definite, + or – abstract; this point may need to be clarified by historical theologians), it seems intuitively clear that *God* per se has a marked status (see below).

After this first stage, we find some fossilization of *who*-constructions. They are no longer used as genuine, iconic representations of highly marked referents (such as God), but rather occur in fixed expressions. These still have a marked status, but nevertheless belong to a different class. There was not a wide choice of letter-closing formulas and blessings at that time (Davis 1965, Schäfer 1995), so that *who*, after its first occurrence in accordance with Markedness Agreement, became more and more naturalized in this context. At a third stage, a generalization of possible antecedents can be observed. Not only are God, saints, and religious antecedents triggers of anaphoric relative *who*, but also good friends, noblemen, the King, and other worthies. It is obvious that this generalization does not eliminate the marked status of the construction completely, but it reduces the amount of markedness by some degree (note the gradual, rather than discrete nature of markedness). Still, socially marked referents deserve linguistically marked symbols, but the degree of markedness that triggers the form is remarkably lower. Gradually its marked status is reduced even further, until the only constraint that is left is today's [+animate] (and even this constraint seems currently to be subject to erosion). We can thus posit the following stages in Table 1 below.

A	The most marked contexts trigger the most marked item	God, saints, and other religious antecedents trigger <i>who</i>
B	Fossilization of stage A	Generalization of "God, who keep you in hys blessing"
C	Loss of saliency; expansion of the range of possible antecedents; reduced markedness	Noblemen, good friends, and worthies trigger <i>who</i>
D	Further relaxation of constraints; constraints become more grammatical and abstract; grammaticalization and further reduction of markedness	[+human] triggers <i>who</i>

Table 1.

As with reanalysis, the stages of this development are quite difficult to document in detail. Certain features of these stages, however, are more readily accessible than others. Stage A is probably the easiest one to document. In a survey of the Paston letters (Davis 1971) we found 124 tokens of *who*, *whose*, and *whom*. The first occurrence of *who* dates from 1426 in a formulaic expression like (5) or (6). The first occurrence of *whose* was in 1425 in a nonformulaic context. *Whom* occurred first in 1430 as a prepositional complement in a nonformulaic passage, (8). Its first occurrence without a preposition was in 1462, in a formulaic context, (9).

- (8) ... *all your seid letters to deluyere to my clerk, to wham I prey you to gyve feith* ... (William Paston I, 1430)
 (9) ... *hit is so pat Ser John Falstof, wham God assoyle, wip opur, was sum tyme by Ser Herry Inglose enfeffed of trust* ...

Of the 31 tokens of *who* in the letters, only four are in nonformulaic expressions. We find two headless relatives (1472, 1478) and the first 'normal' occurrence as late as 1481 with a socially prominent antecedent (*Mastyre Baley*); cf. (10).

- (10) *and also Mastyre Baley, who I wende woold not haue balkyd this pore loggeyng to Norwyche wardys* (Edmond Paston II, 1481)

The fourth occurrence is in a nonformulaic expression, where the antecedent is *the King of Scotland*.

The 37 tokens of *whose*, however, are of rather mixed nature. Twenty-two are in nonformulaic contexts, 15 in formulaic expressions involving *God*, a decedent, etc. The first occurrence is in a nonformulaic context and the antecedent is not even of high social status (see above). Thus we may conclude that *whose* already had undergone the changes postulated above and was, at that time, at a stage of purely syntactic conditioning. Note, by the way, that even in Present-day English *whose* can refer both to animate and inanimate antecedents, a fact that underlines its special status within the system.

Whom may be regarded as in between these two poles. The 56 occurrences are divided almost evenly between 27 formulaic contexts and 29 nonformulaic ones. However, in thirteen of the 29 cases the relative pronoun refers to entities of high social status. Thus we can conclude that *whom* is still at a stage where it is used in formulaic expressions and with reference to entities worthy of high regard. However, slowly but surely other uses are creeping in. It should also be mentioned that in this period, *who* and *whom* only refer to animate antecedents,

and that *which* and *that* can both still be used in the same functions. Even in 1469 John II refers to the Archbishop by *whyche*, Margaret Paston in 1482 refers to the priests who are to take care of her funeral arrangements both by *that* and *which*.

Stage B (fossilization) can be seen in example (11). Here, the relative clause is separated by the VP from its antecedent (*my granddame*), a construction that—apart from its doubtful grammatical status—lets the relative clause appear to be an afterthought added mainly for the sake of decorum. This move reflects the fossilized status of these formulae, that is, they are no longer meant literally.

- (11) *my grandam is dyssessyd, whom God assoyle* (Edmond Paston II, 1479)

Compare also (12) and (13). Here we can see that in this phrasal construction the overt morphology does not match with the underlying cases: in both examples it is the subject that is relativized and thus should receive the relativizer in its nominative form, i.e. *who*. Instead we find oblique *whom(e)*. This also shows (or at least hints at) the formulaic and fossilized status of the expression.

- (12) *by þe grace of God, whom haue you in hys kepyng* (William Paston III, 1478)
 (13) *by godes grace, whome haue you in his kepyng* (Stonor, 1479)

Stages C and D are very difficult to document. In our case, the collection seems too limited to provide a full analysis. It is commonly assumed that it was only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the *wh*-series fully developed its present-day constraints (cf. Grijzenhout 1992). Statistical analyses of fifteenth and sixteenth-century usage would have to show to what extent *which* can no longer be used with animate antecedents, and in what way *who* and, to a certain extent, *whom* lose their marked status.

The same development can also be observed in the collection of Cely letters, though here the latitude of variation seems to be much smaller. In principle we find all relative pronouns with animate antecedents, i.e. Present-day English constraints have not set in yet, but the distribution and relative chronology of first occurrences seem more or less the same as in the Paston corpus.

The year 1478 has the first occurrence of *who* in a formulaic context with the divine antecedent and of *whom* with a human antecedent; *to whom* occurs in

1479. *Whose* is used more widely and first occurs in 1479 with an inanimate antecedent (cf. above). Of the twenty-two occurrences of *who* (in its several spelling variants), all appear in formulaic use with divine antecedents. Some of these occurrences, however, strongly suggest the first characteristics of fossilization and loss of saliency:

- (13) *with the grace [of] God hytt shall not be long erst, who hath yow yn hys keypyng.* (William Cely, 1479)

Here the head of the relative clause is separated from the antecedent by the whole VP. This construction is not unknown in Middle English and also appears elsewhere, but nevertheless, as it is very rare in comparison to the standard construction, it seems to have the character of afterthought or casualness mentioned above. Compare also (14).

- (14) *and that God knows, how perserue* (Harold Stawntoyn, 1480)

Despite the obvious spelling problem, the case seems clear: half of the formula has simply been omitted in this short business note—a sign of its lack of semantic and pragmatic strength. Of the twelve occurrences of *whose*, one has an inanimate antecedent, seven appear with human antecedents, four with divine antecedents (all of which, however, are governed by prepositions). This suggests that *whose* is already on the way to its modern function, and that it has completely lost its [+divine] constraint, if it ever had one. *Whom*, again, is difficult to interpret. Of the seven tokens, six have human antecedents, one has a divine antecedent. At first sight, this suggests loss of the deity constraint. Of the six human antecedents, however, four may have a feature [+respect], so that this seems to be the stage of expansion, where the deity constraint is weakened (stage C). This seems particularly clear in (15).

- (15) *that knowith the blessid Trynyte, whom I beseche to preserve you into good helthe. amen.* (Richard Ryisse, 1479)

The holy Trinity seems to be an unusual formula in this context. Maybe it was used to regain some of the saliency via expressiveness (the letter, no. 66, though short, seems very emotional anyway and documents the author's survival of the plague, a fact that naturally calls for thankfulness). But compare also (16).

- (16) *and ther whe tarryd tyll the Kyngys dowter whos kyrstynd, hos name ys Bregyt* (Richard Cely II, 1480)

Here, *whose* («*hos*»), has a high-status antecedent, the King's daughter, and seems to reflect the development through the relaxation of constraints listed under point (C) in Table 1.

This four-stage progression can be observed in a number of developments in the history of English, including at least *do*-periphrasis, genitive case marking, inversion, glottalization, and infinitive marking.

4. *Periphrastic do*

Our next example comes from the development of *do*-periphrasis. Stein (1990) has established a framework that enabled us to look at the origin and development of *do*-periphrasis from a semantic-pragmatic point of view. It is claimed that two different factors contributed to the development of periphrastic *do*. First we find remarkableness, and secondly there is a contrastive use that is based on remarkableness, but constitutes a much narrower restriction. What actually, then, makes something remarkable? Hübler (1998:133) says quite simply, "Assuming that the speaker gets emotionally involved entails the assumption that the propositional content of the statement, or some parts of it, shows characteristics that in some way or another motivate his/her involvement ... [T]he contents must show qualities that can be classified as remarkable." In other words, it is again the ontological status of the signifié or context that is marked or unmarked and thus triggers the respective linguistic form. It is obviously not the linguistic environment that first triggers new forms. However, Hübler is also at pains to stress that his notion of remarkableness is not the same as Stein's. Whereas Stein assumes contrastivity to be the source of remarkableness (that *x* happened is remarkable only because *y* could also have happened, but did not), for Hübler it "is merely a condition for attributing to the periphrastic form the function of expressing the speaker's involvement" (ibid.). However, it seems clear that the latter approach does nothing but state that something is remarkable because the speaker thinks it is remarkable, and that both approaches fall short when it comes to the question of the initial motivation. Only when we take outside evidence as support can we explain why something should be remarkable at all. Remarkableness is in the final analysis nothing but the quality of a fact, its ontology, which lets it appear as marked. This can include contrast (something that is unexpected naturally must be marked), but also marked signifiés. This refers to situations which Stein (1990:64) called the authority-type of periphrasis; see (18) and (19).

- (17) *our saviour Christ therefore did promise* (quoted from Stein 1990:64)

- (18) *As the scripture sayeth, that "God through faithe dothe purifye & make cleane all hartes"* (quoted from Hübler 1998:134)

Here again, just as with the relative pronouns discussed above, the referent of *God*, holy scripture, or general association with the deity triggers the use of marked forms. There seems no need to take the issue up again. Hübler, then, gives an account of a phenomenon that comes very close to Markedness Agreement, but without mentioning markedness. He cites one of the Cely letters as an example where neither remarkableness nor contrastivity seems to be present:

- (19) *Fyddymore, plesse hytt yowre mastyschypys to vnderstonde that I doo send yow at thys passage be Wylliam Smyth, packer of wullys, a letter wherelyn ys enclosyd ij letters of payment, one of John Flewelen ... and anoder of Roger Bowser* (quoted from Hübler 1998:135).

Nevertheless, if we look at the broader context of the utterance, we note that this letter was written by a businessman for business purposes. And in this context, according to Hübler, a functional category 'remarkableness' might well be applied, even though at first sight this is neither a case of remarkableness nor contrastivity. From our point of view, however, the functional category 'remarkableness' seems the same as a marked environment. Even today business letters can hardly be called an unmarked text type. Instead they brim with highly marked constructions, vocabulary, and style (a high frequency of the passive, for instance). Thus, we can say that again a marked context, or marked signifié triggered the occurrence of marked forms.

What this second case shows is that markedness and Markedness Agreement can often be determined only when a very broad context and the social situation are taken into account. Also, the speaker or writer, and his or her audience should be considered. Especially in the case of remarkableness some introspection seems to be called for in order to determine what might have led to the use of the marked form. After all, all the speakers had other expressions at their disposal, which they deliberately decided not to use. And it is from this perspective that markedness and the motivation(s) for the use of marked forms should be examined.

Addendum: Heavenly language.

It has been stated above that in many cases reference to God, saints, and other religious entities plays a certain role in choosing the right linguistic form,

probably because of their ontologically marked status, and that this might be the source, or rather a potential entry point, for innovations, and thus also for the actuation of linguistic change. In this brief addendum we would like to adduce further evidence for this claim from two Southeast Asian languages, Thai and Burmese. These languages have very complex classifier systems. On one hand, classifiers must be present to individuate the noun (as these denote substances, not entities, as in many European languages) before it can be enumerated, on the other hand, classifiers may be used as modifiers in the noun phrase, together with determiners and adjectives. In these cases, they are used to materialize the noun to make it modifiable. Shape, for instance, is one salient characteristic that may be expressed within the classifier system, as with salient one-dimensional objects in Thai, e.g., *sen* 'long, flexible', *phôm saam sen* 'three hairs' (Foley 1997: 237). But apart from this, we also find distinctions drawn in status and worthiness (see Table 2, adopted from Foley 1997:237; the same phenomena can be found in Shona, cf. Palmer & Woodman 1998). Both languages reserve special quantifiers for religious objects (note inter alia some interesting iconic principles in the Thai *phráʔoŋ-ʔoŋ* system in Table 2). The relationship between religious value and linguistic form, however, is far from being universal (many other languages show no such pattern at all). Nevertheless, there can be a connection between a social structure and a linguistic system. Burmese and Thai are spoken in societies that are highly stratified, much like those of medieval Europe (cf., for instance, the gradual world picture, developed by Aquinas, in which everything is ordered in relation to God). Much work in this area needs to be done, however, before further conclusions can be drawn.

Sacred			
↑	<i>phráʔoŋ</i>	for the Buddha, deities, and royalty	
	<i>ʔoŋ</i>	for the Buddha, deities, royalty, and monks (weaker alternate)	
	<i>rûup</i>	for priests, monks, and idols	
	<i>thân</i>	for persons of high social rank (teachers, ministers, and lesser nobility...)	
	<i>naay</i>	for men of some social standing	
	<i>nnaŋ</i>	for women of some social standing	
	<i>khon</i>	for ordinary persons	
	<i>ton</i>	for beings of supernatural faculties (with sinister implications)	
	<i>chiak</i>	for tame elephants	
	<i>tua</i>	for any kind of animal or bird	
↓			Profane

Table 2. Thai categories of respect.