Introduction
At any given moment, the addressee is in a temporary cognitive state regarding his knowledge of what the speaker is saying. It is the speaker’s job to adjust his speech to accommodate the hearer’s current temporary state. The term *packaging* refers to how the message is sent, not the message itself.

Packaging of Nouns
1. The noun may be given or new.
2. It may be a focus of contrast.
3. It may be definite or indefinite.
4. It may be the subject of the sentence.
5. It may be the topic of the sentence.
6. It may represent the individual whose point of view the speaker is taking, or with whom the speaker empathizes.

- Chafe does not include “generic” or “indefinite” in this list, since he says these terms deal more with content than with packaging.
- This list deals exclusively with nouns, but he says many of the generalizations can be extended to verbs as well.
- Chafe argues that these are not just syntactic statuses—they perform a cognitive function as well. In this paper, Chafe attempts to clear up confusion between these six statuses, while proving that they are cognitive and not syntactic.

1. Givenness
Old (what the speaker is expected to know already) vs. new (what is being introduced to the speaker’s knowledge for the first time)
(1) I saw your father yesterday.
Chafe says that the usual analysis of (1) calls *your father* new information (??) But under his analysis, it’s not that the addressee is not familiar with his father, just that he was not in the temporary state of thinking of him at the present moment. He prefers the terms *already activated* and *newly activated*.

How is givenness expressed?
- lower pitch
- weaker stress
- subject to pronominalization, but only when speaker knows it can be correctly interpreted by the hearer, and will not result in ambiguity.

4. Subjects
The “adding-knowledge-about” hypothesis: Take a starting point (subject) and use it as “hitching post” for adding to hearer’s knowledge of it.
(2) John broke his arm yesterday.
In (2), **John** is the hitching post and **broke his arm yesterday** is the knowledge added to it.

**How is subjecthood expressed?**
- English uses word order
- Iroquois uses verb prefixes which agree not with subject but with case. However in some cases, agent verbal prefixes are being used with transitive verbs as a subject prefix. Since often the agent is indeed the subject, this shows that agenthood and subjecthood can be confused. According to Chafe, this is evidence in favor of the cognitive status of subjecthood.

**How long does subjecthood last?**
(3) Ted saw Harry yesterday. He told him about the meeting.
Subject status is preserved across the sentence. Yet it is also easy to change the subject. Though there is a tendency in for subjects to be given, there is no necessary correlation:

(4) What happened? The dog knocked over the lamp.
In (4), the **dog** is new (but doesn’t this contradict (1), where Chafe says that **your father** is not new information?)

Chafe disagrees with Hornby about the nature of topic being old and comment being new. Instead Chafe seems to feel that Hornby’s idea of topic as “what the sentence is about” is the same as his own idea of subject.

5. **Topics**

**English Topics**
(5) The play, John saw yesterday.
(6) As for the play, John saw it yesterday.
Chafe says that these so-called topicalized sentences are actually examples of contrastiveness. The topic is actually a focus of contrast.

Although English uses these contrastive topics, other languages, such as those which are thought of as topic-prominent, do not. Chafe calls the topics in topic-prominent languages “real topics,” and says that they are so different from English contrastive topics that we should no longer even use the word “topic” to refer to these English cases of contrastiveness.

**Chinese Topics**
(7) nei-xie shumu shu-shen da those tree tree-trunk big
(8) nei-ge ren yang ming George Zhang that person foreign name George Zhang
- These sentences do not fit the definition of topic as “what a sentence is about,” since what is being predicated of is tree trunks (7) and foreign names (8), not “tree” (7) and “person” (8), which are topically-marked.
- Instead, it seems topic sets a spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the predication holds.
- In English we can do this with temporal adverbs (Tuesday I went to the store) or prepositions (In Dwinelle Hall people are always getting lost.) or by reordering the sentence (The trunks of those trees are big).

**Topics as Premature Subjects**
Speakers must decide on the form of the sentence as well as on the subject of the sentence. The form places restrictions on what the subject can be, while the choice of subject places restrictions on what the form can be. Sometimes speakers may get confused; ex. from Caddo:

(9) k’an kambah wa-wa hawwi duhya
    ducks they-said OK now

(10) sa us bahna sinatti tucat i-hahwah
    Ms. Owl it-is-said then she-spilled it

- Apparently the speaker of (9) decided that she wanted to talk about ducks before she had uttered the rest of the sentence, thus causing “ducks” not to fit into the form of the sentence.
- In (10), the same thing happens: “Ms. Owl” is uttered in subject form before the speaker has decided on the form of the rest of the sentence. It is then followed by the hesitation particle “it is said” as well as “then,” indicating the beginning of a new clause.
- Chafe says this is evidence of topics actually being “premature subjects”—subjects which are chosen too soon, and not integrated into the rest of the sentence.

6. Point of View or Empathy

(11) a. John hit his wife.
    b. Mary’s husband hit her.
    c. Mary’s husband hit his wife.

In (11), (a) describes the event “from John’s side” while (b) describes the same event “from Mary’s side.” Chafe calls this “empathy.” A sentence cannot have empathy for more than one focus of empathy, which explains the unacceptability of (c).

- If the speaker himself is part of the sentence, empathy will likely be with him.
- Empathy for the addressee is more likely than empathy for a third party.
- Human referents are more likely to be empathized with.
- Status as the focus of empathy is likely to coincide with subject status and definiteness.

Conclusion

In addition to syntactic status, nouns have a cognitive status, or packaging. The speaker decides how to package each referent based on his view of what is going on in the hearer’s mind.