CHAPTER III

OCCUPATIONS AND CONVERSATIONAL PRINCIPLES[0]

As pointed out above, there are several types of generic which either are not simple habituals(although partaking of their nature), or do not have the characteristics of habituals at all, in that they do not presuppose, imply, entail, or even invite any inferences regarding past performance of the activity described by the verb. The only reason I consider them under the rubric "generic" is because they share the common construction of present tense active indicative, without referring to immediate present time as such. Of these, the one which I have investigated the most thoroughly is that which I call the "occupational" generic. I have also identified at least two others, the "functional" and the "potential", which I mentioned in Lawler (1972) . I have here little new information on these constructions, which, I believe, are intrinsically more complex and difficult to analyze semantically; I will discuss them briefly toward the end of this chapter. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an investigation of the occupational generic, its syntax and semantics, and the application of conversational principles[1] to yield results which will explicate, to some degree, the vagaries of this construction, as well as some facts about the habitual.

The occupational generic is a simple concept to grasp: basically, it is similar to a habitual, except that it is more restricted in its uses--it is usable only to describe one's occupation. More precisely, a habitual generic, under certain circumstances (partly syntactically determined, partly socially), can acquire an occupational meaning, either in addition to or (more rarely) to the exclusion of its normal habitual sense. Our task here is to define just how (and whether) the habitual generic differs from the occupational, and also to develop means of characterizing the circumstances under which occupationals occur. Some examples of occupationals follow :

(1) Ken drives a truck.

(2) Mona makes dresses.

(3) Bill teaches linguistics.

(4) Frank sells pencils.

(5) Harry runs a gas station.

(6) Max plays football.

Others could easily be adduced ad infinitum. The point which must be made here immediately is that this is not just a predictable context-variant reading of a habitual, but has some additional features that the habitual does not share. In addition, it seems that the semantic material conveyed by the occuptional generic is sufficiently different from that in the habitual to block deletion under identity, which is close to guaranteeing either different structure or different lexical items.

Consider the following situation: Ken is a linguistics professor who believes that trucks are more fun, more economical, and more convenient than cars for daily driving. Accordingly, he drives a pickup truck as his usual "car". Max, on the other hand, is a teamster, driving a rig across country. George, finally, is another linguistics professor who owns and customarily drives a Volkswagen as his normal vehicle. There are many ways in which we can report situations:

(7) Ken drives a truck.

(8) Max drives a truck.

(9) George drives a VW.

The nominalizations, however, begin to cause problems:

(10) *Ken is a truck driver. (in intended sense)

(11) Max is a truck driver.

(12) George is a VW driver.

One can Gap certain combinations of these sentences, but not others:

(13) George drives a VW, and Ken a truck.

(14) *George drives a VW, and Max a truck.

Similarly with <u>do so</u> pronominalization:

(15) *Max drives a truck, and Ken does so too.

(There is one good reading for (15)--that on which we abstract the fact that Max habitually drives a truck from the fact that he does so for a living; this is conjoinable to (7), which is also a habitual--but this is clearly not the sense intended from the description of the situation.)

This tells us that we have something on our hands which is not easily handleable in our present state of knowledge.

In order to investigate this phenomenon, it will be necessary for us to first find some test for occupationals, and then to try to define the situations in which this test tells us that the occupational is either possible or necessary. It will obviously be impossible to do this without having recourse to social conventions; in fact, we will find that the codification of certain social principles in our language through the means of conversational implications and similar devices is the mechanism that makes much of this phenomenon possible.

The best test that I have been able to find is: an occupational generic is always in order as the answer of the question.

(16) What does he do?[2]

That is, any non-misleading answer to (16) is either an occupational generic or uses an agent nominal, which amounts to the same thing:

(17) He practices medicine.

(18) He's a doctor.

We can then investigate just what sort of sentences are, in fact, appropriate[3] in this context. It turns out that there are at least three conditions necessary:

A. <u>The Activity Criterion</u>. An occupational generic must be a verb denoting an activity (in the linguistic sense); this is, in generative semantic terms, it appears

embedded under DO.

B. The Income Criterion. An occupational generic must be a verb denoting an activity whose performance yields income for the agent.

C. The Normal Practice Criterion. An occupational generic must be a verb denoting an activity for which there is some socially accepted "usual way" in which the occupation is carried out; if there is none, or if it's sufficiently uncommon, the generic lacks the occupational reading.

Of the three criteria above, note that only one is syntactic, in any usual meaning of syntax, while the others are social. In addition, note that the two social criteria are stated in such a loose way that it is difficult to see just what is meant; we will see that they are inadequate in some other ways, also.

To begin with, it is not difficult to see why an occupational must be an active verb, particularly in the context of an answer to (16); but this is reflected also in our social notion of earning a living by our activities. Suppose, for example, that Bill has some real estate holdings, which provide him income without his having to do anything about them; then (19) is a least inappropriate, if not untrue, as an answer to (16):

(19) %Bill owns land.

On the other hand, if it is understood that Bill actively engages in the management of his holdings, (19) is much better; in certain constructions, such an inference is all

but unavoidable, and these are far better as answers to (16):

(20) Bill owns his own $\left\{\begin{array}{l}\text{business}\\ \text{factory}\\ \text{store}\end{array}\right\}$.

The occupational generic, therefore, does seem to be a generic in the sense we have been discussing, in that it is restricted to active verbs in the present tense; hence the presence of do in (16). The other criteria, however, seem to make far less linguistic sense.

To see what is meant by the Income Criterion, consider the following case, where the other criteria hold, but it fails: Bill is independently wealthy, but feels that he should devote some of his time and effort to charitable causes; therefore he spends a considerable portion of his time driving a truck for the Salvation Army, receiving no wages for this activity. Then, in answer to (16), I find (21) quite inappropriate:

(21) Bill drives a truck.

The fact that this is true as a normal habitual generic does not help its appropriateness as an occupational.

Finally, the Normal Practice Criterion is by far the most complicated and the least well stated of the three; in fact, it is probably the case that this should be subdivided into several criteria. The ideas involved include: (a) there being some "normal" way of earning money by doing the activity mentioned; (b) the purposeful performance of the activity in the normal manner and circumstances; (c) the earning of income through the usual channels of payment

for value received. We can consider them one at a time, constructing situations in which each fails, and noting the aberrance of the resulting sentences.

Note that (9), although grammatical, is not normally understood as an occupational; this is because, although there is a normally-understood manner in which driving a truck can bring income to the driver, it is not so easy to conceive of a situation in which driving a VW can be construed as an occupation. Someone, however, must drive the Volkswagens out of the factory when they are completed; someone must drive Volkwagens in economy rallyes; etc. However, in these cases, (9) is still not correct as the answer to (16); the correct descriptions all involve plural generics, preferably with further amplification:

(22) Bill drives Volkswagens (out of the factory).

(23) Bill drives Volkswagens (in economy rallyes).

This is true despite the fact that (8) does not necessarily imply that there is only one truck that Max drives occupationally; the singular generic (?) in (8) does not have anything to do with the number of different trucks he drives, but one cannot construct a parallel sentence to describe the occupations referred to in (22)-(23). Thus, the existence of the normal mode is crucial, in some sense.

Next, the second clause requires that, once the normal mode has been referred to by the generic, the particular activity described must conform not only to the habitual generic description, but also to all the ramifications of the

normal mode. That is, not only must someone (say Max) actually, habitually, drive a truck for wages in order to satisfy the requirements of the situation reported by (8), but he must also do so for the purpose of haulage, filling the truck with goods to be delivered at a different place, and conveying them there. Any other reason will not do. Suppose, for example, that Max is a truck tester for Consumer Reports, whose job consists of loading a truck to its maximum capacity and then driving it until something goes wrong, and taking notes on the performance. Then, although driving a truck is clearly involved, and the habitual generic sense of (8) is true and appropriate in certain instances, (8) is still not good as an answer to (16). In this case, also, the appropriate occupational description involves plural generics:

(24) Max $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{tests}\\ \text{drives}\end{matrix}\right\}$ trucks for Consumer Reports.

Finally, the notion of payment for value received seems to be reflected in the notion of occupation. Suppose all the previous conditions have been met: Max performs an action, that of driving a truck, in the normal fashion, engaging in hauling goods from one place to another, and receives income from the performance of this activity; this is still not enough. We can construct a situation (admittedly bizarre, but this is more due to our social structure than anything else) in which (8) is not an appropriate occupational description. Suppose Max is the beneficiary of an eccentric uncle, who felt his nephew needed more contact with the

working-man's life; he therefore left Max a comfortable income on condition he drive a truck 40 hours a week. Max thereupon engages in the normal practice of hauling, but accepts no payment for his services (one can imagine that he would be in demand), living instead on his inherited income. Then (8) is still not appropriate as an answer to (16)[4], even though it is true that his income is derived from his performance of the activity, and it is performed in the usual way (except for the billing arrangements). We see, then, that quid pro quo is not a business principle only, but has something to do with the use of language to describe situations.

All of the above discussion has been by way of categorizing just what an occupation is, in the limited framework of the occupational generic. We have been more concerned with just what an occupational generic means, what situations it can report, than with any syntactic (or systematic semantic) description of the phenomenon. Before we come to this, however, there are some further observations that can be made in this framework; in particular, the problems of conjunctions will provide us with some illuminating examples of conversational principles in action.

The question arises as to the proper description of a person's occupation who regularly performs two or more actvities, either of which would normally pass the tests for occupational generics. Clearly, a conjunction of the two generics is always in order, although it may be a bit

awkward in certain cases. This ought to be enough in the way of characterization of the situation, but it is not. There are many cases in which there is a clearly preferred occupational description, and these hinge on numerous social circumstances, most of which are mirrored in the conversational principles which govern such descriptions.[5]

Consider the following situation: Mary writes children's books in the mornings and teaches kindergarten in the afternoons. She derives income from both activities. How are we to answer (16) (mutatis mutandis)?

(25) Mary writes children's books and teaches kindergarten.

(26) Mary writes children's books.

(27) Mary teaches kindergarten.

(25) seems acceptable, for obvious reasons, but things are not so clear with (26) and (27). Our impulse is to say that either might be appropriate, under certain circumstances. Let us, then, construct circumstances:

(i) Mary is at a writers' conference. The questioner asks (16) of an acquaintance of hers.

(ii) Mary is at a teachers' conference. The questioner asks (16) of an acquaintance of hers.

It is clear that here, we find unequivocal choices; (26) is correct and appropriate in situation (i), and (27) is not, and the reverse is true in (ii).[6] This is because the relevance of (26) is obvious in the situation described in (8), and (27) is clearly relevant in (ii). Answering (16) by the inappropriate choice in either situation would give the impression that the speaker could not say anything more

relevant about Mary than that, which is not very relevant; this would have the effect of misleading the questioner, who has a right to get an answer which tells him all the speaker can say that is clearly relevant to his interests (as interpreted by the speaker, to be sure--but the situations described leave no room for doubt). This follows from the well-known conversational principle that, provided both speakers are cooperating, each must tell the other everything he can that he believes the other wants to know.

This is one example of how conversational principles enter into the situation; there are others. If we can, for the moment, ignore the circumstances of the context (perhaps by substituting a neutral context, say a party at a friend's house, where we can expect to meet people of all kinds, with all types of interests), we will find that there are some types of constraint on descriptions which supersede immediate utterance context. We can then proceed to the following situations:

(iii) Mary is a famous writer, and has won numerous awards for her books; she derives the vast majority of her income from writing, and continues to teach because she likes it.

(iv) Mary is a poor writer, and no one has ever heard of her; she derives little of her income from writing--most of it comes from teaching.

Again, we have clear choices: (26) is appropriate in situation (iii), and (27) in situation (iv).[7] This time, however, the answer is not so easy. (iii) and (iv) were designed to be unequivocal; there are at least three factors involved

here, each of which is maximized in situation (iii) and minimized in (iv). These are:

D: The Relative Income Criterion. If a person habitually performs two or more activities, deriving income from each, and otherwise satisfying all the criteria for description of each with an occupational generic, and there is a great disparity of income between (or among) the occupations, then it is inappropriate to describe the person's occupation with an occupational generic referring alone to the occupation which earns the least income.

(This refers to the difference in amount of money earned in the two occupations in (iii) and (iv).

E. The Notoreity Criterion. In the same circumstances, if there is a great disparity in the notoreity or glamor attached to the occupations, then it is inappropriate to describe the person's occupation with an occupational generic referring alone to the occupation which has the least notoreity.

(I use notoreity here in a non-pejorative sense; but see below for some cases in which the pejorative nature of the activity is crucial.)

F: The Social Value Criterion. In the same circumstances, if there is a great disparity in the value, status, or importance attached to the occupations (either in the mind of the speaker or in society in general), then it is inappropriate to describe the person's occupation with an occupational generic referring alone to the occupation with the least value.

(This criterion and the Notoreity Criterion are clearly related, and might be thought to be the same, but there are some cases which show them to be at least partially independent.)

Of these, the Relative Income Criterion needs the least explanation, although there is some question as to why it is the Income Criterion (B) which has been extended here, and not the Normal Practice Criterion (C)[8]. The other two do need some discussion.

It will be noted that in situations (iii) and (iv) the three criteria D-F either reinforce each other or at least do not contradict. Although these situations were constructed with this in mind, this is not totally a matter of intent. It is in fact quite difficult to conceive of situations in which fame and fortune do not go hand in hand (at least in our society), and those occupations which are thought to possess the most social value are, with some exceptions, also remunerative and capable of making one better-known. It is, however, possible. In fact, certain seeming violations of the criteria can be explained by noting the different views of the structure and nature of society held by the participants in the discussion.

The Social Value Criterion makes reference to the possibility of differing judgements on the intangible "social value" of a given occupation. It is conceivable that Mary, in situation (iv), might describe herself as a writer, although no one else would, or that she might describe herself as a teacher in situation (iii); either of these opinions

might be shared by someone else if, for example, he held a high regard for Writing as an Art, and believed that any art took precedence over a mundane activity like teaching (or vice versa, in a way). But these are individual and, to some degree, cultural matters; knowing the background and beliefs of the speaker would explain his response, if it were at variance with the one dictated by D-F; similarly, a person who knew the situation and heard Mary described in (iii) as a teacher in in (iv) as a writer would be able to tell something about the value structure of the speaker.

Both the Notoreity and Social Value criteria proceed from conversational principles, in fact the same ones we appealed to to explain the contextual variation in (i)-(ii). That is, "say as much as you can that is relevant." The key word here, as there, is relevant. It is a fact of human nature that, all other things being equal, one would rather know that a person was famous (Notoreity Criterion) or that he practiced a high-status profession (Social Value Criterion) than any thing else about his occupation(s). For some reason, this type of information, dealing with fame and status, is considered more "relevant" than income, even, so that the Relative Income Criterion is itself superseded by these two criteria, particularly the Notoreity Criterion. Consider the following situation:

(v) Jake plays professional baseball during the season, but during the rest of the year he sells real estate; he is so good at this latter job that he makes by far the majority of his income at it.

Which is then appropriate:

(28) Jake plays baseball.

or (29) Jake sells real estate. ?

Obviously, (28) is the appropriate answer to (16); (29) is so inappropriate that even the conjunction (30) seems strange:

(30) Jake plays baseball and sells real estate .

unless the question (16) is rephrased to inquire specifically about the source of income alone, as (31):

(31) What does he do for a living?

But this is quite different, in that it is more specific than (16), and, for quite obvious reasons, lacks any reference to the other criteria. We will ignore this reading here. In situation (v), then, the Notoreity Criterion overrides the Relative Income Criterion, since the mere acquisition of money is not allowed to compete in esteem or notoreity with participation in the National Pastime.

The interaction of the Social Value Criterion and the Relative Income Criterion is not so clear. Here, it seems, one may choose either. Suppose:

(vi) Wallace is a noted poet ("noted" in the context of poetry should be taken to mean "known to those who read poetry"), but, since poetry is notoriously unremunerative, he supports himself by selling insurance.

(32) Wallace writes poetry.

(33) Wallace sells insurance.

Since the Notoreity Criterion is not operative (those who read poetry do not constitute a sufficiently large audience

to confer fame)[9], we have the Social Value and Relative Income Criteria opposed, provided that the speaker is not a philistine. It seems to me that either (32) or (33) is appropriate, but in this context, perhaps the conjunction would be even better than either alone:

(34) Wallace writes poetry and sells insurance.

Similarly, in contrasting the Social Value and Notoreity Criteria, there does not seem to be a clear-cut choice for all people; there is considerably more dialectal variation in the descriptions of situation (vii) than with any of the others we have discussed:

(vii) Zelda derives equal amounts of money from designing dresses and from prostitution. We can ignore for the moment the fact that those who know of the one occupation will be unlikely to know of the other one, and assume that (16) is to be answered by someone who is aware of both.

(35) Zelda designs dresses.

(36) Zelda is a prostitute.[10]

While I have a definite notion that (36) alone is preferable to (35) alone as a description, others disagree; some people I have asked about this feel that either alone is acceptable. This demonstrates that there is not universal agreement about the place of the criteria in a hierarchy of application. We have, I think, demonstrated that the Notoreity Criterion is stronger than the Relative Income Criterion, and that the Social Value Criterion (if it is on such a scale) is at about the same level as the Relative Income Criterion, but for those who disagree with my intuitions about (vii),

there does not seem to be a rigid hierarchy containing the Social Value Criterion (or perhaps it is not functional as a criterion).[11] In any event, there is more to the descriptions of occupations than can be easily accounted for in strict linguistic terms; it is necessary not only to refer to what we know about the world and our society, but to normal societal standards and feelings, as well as the perceived interests of our conversants.[12]

The above exercise in (a type of) sociolinguistics has constantly had reference to the principle of cooperation in speaking. While this does not totally explain all of the phenomena adduced, it goes a long way towards it. In fact, we can apply it to other situations to get some interesting non-trivial results. Recall that one of the problems dealt with in Chapter I was the distinction between universal and existential generics; (37) for example, is universal, while (38) is existential:

(37) Bill walks to school.

(38) Little Irwin bites.

I believe that the normal case of the habitual generic is probably the universal one, and that only under special circumstances are existential generics used (or usable). If this is correct, it will simplify the problems involved enormously. How can such a theory be advanced, in the face of the clear distinction between generic existentials and universals?

The fact to note is that it is primarily in the cases

where something exceptional (in the sense of unusual, dangerous, notorious, or irritating) is predicated of the subject that we get an existential reading. Now, it has been noted before that, while (say) a businessman is someone who always engages in business, a thief is someone who sometimes engages in larceny.[13] That is, exceptional cases (particularly those involving pejorative descriptions) generalize easily, while the normal cases must be practically without exception. It is, in fact, relevant to the listener to know that there have been instances of little Irwin's biting, since the possibility exists that he might be bitten himself; but there is nothing exceptional about walking to school, and attention would not be paid to it unless it were universal (in the sense discussed in Chapter 1). Similarly, the existential reading of the ambiguous (39) seems possible only in circumstances which make an existential relevant:

(39) Bill drinks beer.

(39) is interpretable as an existential (with, note, somewhat strange intonation, characteristic of a concessive statement) primarily in those cases in which it is important to the listener (or the speaker believes it is important) to know whether Bill will drink beer at all, as, for instance, if the speaker knows that the listener is having Bill over that evening, and knows also that the listener is concerned over whether Bill is strictly a Scotch drinker. In that case the existential is clearly relevant; as relevant as the warning implicit in (38). Similarly, John's dog's habit of chasing cats in (40) is an example of something unpleasant,

and therefore relevant:

(40) John's dog chases cats.

In short, the seeming unpredictability of the existential habitual generic can, in large measure, be dealt with, provided we have recourse to conversational principles, particularly those having to do with the relative relevance of any given fact to the listener, and the options this affords the speaker. In fact, given this analysis, we may be able to posit some intermediate analysis using the predicate TYPICAL, a possibility which we rejected in Chapter I. Since such a predicate would not give us any quantification, it would have to be viewed as, at best, an intermediate lexical possibility of the underlying semantic material in the generic itself; but it could shed some light on the meaning of typical itself, as well as helping integrate Stewart's observations and analyses into our framework. (See Chapter IV for further discussion of Stewart's work.)

It is possible (and hopefully will turn out to be the case) that similar applications of this principle can solve the equally puzzling quantifier problems encountered with NP generics (Chapter IV) and certain frequency adverbs (Appendix), but I have no solutions to these problems to offer here.

We now come to the rather difficult problem of accounting for the occurrence of the occupational generic, and trying to investigate its syntactic properties in this light. We have shown that a different sense of the verb is involved; and as was pointed out in (Lawler (1972)), there are also

some difficulties in accounting for the embedding possibilities of occupationals. The facts, in brief, are these: of the following sentences, all of which contain a complement clause which should be interpretable as an occupational, only those marked with an "0" are in fact so interpreted, in addition to their normal habitual reading; the others cannot be read as occupationals:

(41) Bill wants to drive a truck. -0

(42) Bill tried to drive a truck. -Ø

(43) Bill likes to drive a truck. -Ø

(44) Bill likes driving a truck. -0

(45) Bill seems to drive a truck. -Ø

(46) Bill happens to drive a truck. -0

(47) It seems Bill drives a truck. -0

(48) It happens Bill drives a truck. -0

(49) John taught Bill to drive a truck. -Ø

(50) John trained Bill to drive a truck. -0

(51) Bill stopped driving a truck. -0

(52) Bill finished driving a truck. -Ø

(53) ?Bill ceased driving a truck. -Ø

(54) Bill ceased to drive a truck. -0

The relevant variables include type of verb, complementizer choice (gerund works in (44) but not (53); infinitive works in (54) but not (43)), application of Raising (blocks occupational reading in (45) but not (46)), and no doubt many others.[14] When I presented these facts in (Lawler(1972)) I was not able to propose any satisfying explanation for

them, and I regret that I am still not able to, although the suspicion has been growing on me that these facts should follow from a rigorous definition of an occupation, combined with application of conversational principles--however, I have not been able to find the right definitions or principles. Nevertheless, the facts obviously need accounting for.

I think, however, that the existence of the occupational generic in the first place is due to a situation which has little to do with generics. We noted that the occupational was, like the habitual, restricted to active verbs; this entails that it occurs under DO, in the generative semantic analysis. But the surface manifestation of DO, do, can have either an occupational or a non-occupational sense, independent of its use as a generic (note (16), for example), and this fact allows us to shunt off the occupational reading to the occurence of the DO, noting that whenever we interpret do (for whatever reasons) as referring to an occupation, we can also interpret any habitual generic as an occupational. Thus, the occupational will not have to have a different structure from the habitual; this will not explain everything about the occupational, but I think this analysis is as viable as any other, and has the advantage of not requiring separate structures.

Finally, I have (unfortunately) little to add to what I said about the functional and potential generics in (Lawler (1972)), except to note that certain of the potential generics may be partially explicable from conversational and contextual principles. I still have no explanation

for the existence, behavior, or meanings of the functional generics, exemplified by:

(55) This button connects you with the secretary.

(56) The sear engages the hammer unless the safety is on.

(57) Tab "A" fits in slot "B".

It may be the case that the functional, which is normally restricted to sentences with inanimate subjects, is simply the only interpretation of what would be a habitual if the subject were animate, since inanimate things cannot have "habits", since they are not volitional. Particularly when dealing with machines, it seems somehow normal to believe that when we discuss recurring typical events, we are referring to behavior which performs the function which the item was designed to do. While this is merely a nebulous feeling, it is the closest I can come to an explanation for these generics, which I will henceforth ignore.

The potential generic, as I noted in (Lawler (1972)), is existential, where the functional is universal. The potential is exemplified in:

(58) Frank speaks German.

(59) Bill's car goes 150 miles an hour.

(58) and (59) are, of course, interpretable in other ways, but there is one reading of these (as well as of (57) which is equivalent to a paraphrase with a modal of possibility:

(60) Bill's car can go 150 miles an hour.

(61) Frank can speak German.

(62) Tab "A" will fit in slot "B".

(Note that in (60) either can or will is acceptable, and the meanings do not seem to be different, while can is the only modal that works in (61), and will is the modal of choice in (62)--I have no idea what, if anything, this tells us about this construction, except that it is troublesome.)

In the potential readings, there does not seem to be any necessity to quantify over past activity, so no recourse to the habitual analysis is possible.[15] However, some principle apparently allows us to infer performance from possibility, in that the meaning of the potential generic involves a modal, but it shows up on the surface as a simple (if this word can ever be used felicitously of these constructions) generic.

There may be some benefit in the observation that the potentialities expressed by the potential generics are, each in its own way, as relevant to the interests of the listener as the other existential generics discussed above. However, this does not tell us how the underlying structure containing a modal (or so I will assume, on semantic grounds) is allowed to surface as a generic, outwardly indistinguishable from any other. Nor does it explain why the potential construction is limited to a very few forms, as can be seen from the paucity of examples above. To these we can add the play of play the piano/the flute, etc., and the drive of (63):

(63) Bill drives, doesn't he?

and very few others. Note that when the subject is animate, the potential generic always expresses an acquired skill;

this is interesting, and appears to be necessary, but it does not tell why other acquired skills are not read as potential, nor why sentences like (59), with inanimate subjects, are possible in a potential reading. Note, for example, (64) where an acquired skill is referred to,

(64) Bill runs the marathon.

although a potential reading is not possible.

I remain at a loss to account for these constructions, for the most part. Obviously, more work is called for in solving these problems; however, it seems to me that there has been some progress since the points were originally brought up in Lawler (1972) , although not always in the ways I anticipated.

FOOTNOTES

[0] I wish to thank George and Robin Lakoff, and Ann Borkin, for many helpful comments and suggestions regarding much of the material contained in this chapter, which was uncirculated in an earlier version under the title "Occupational Therapy."

[1] See Gordon and Lakoff (1971) for discussion of conversational principles and their use in syntax and semantics.

[2] It is important to distinguish here (16) from the related question (65):

(65) What is he?

(65) is frequently answered by an occupation, but never in a generic; it can also be answered by a religion, nationality, or rank. (65) seems to question status, and to the degree that an occupation reflects this, it is an acceptable answer; (65) does not, however, question occupation directly.

[3] I use the term "appropriate" here, instead of "grammatical", since much of what I have to say in the first part of the chapter has to do with social judgements and the proper way to report them. The sentences which we will be dealing with are for the most part well-formed by any syntactic criterion, and even perfectly meaningful; the problem is that they do not always report the situation under discussion in a truthful manner, or that while they may be logically true, they are misleading in certain instances. Thus, we will be concerned not with grammaticality or truth conditions as such, but with appropriateness of the sentence as a description of a situation.

[4] I think the fact that there is <u>no</u> really adequate way to report this situation is irrelevant to the discussion, showing only that there are situations for which our language has no ready answer, something that has been discovered before (see, for instance, Fillmore (1971)).

[5] Note that if English were behaving in a strictly logical way, such a situation would not (in fact, could not) arise, since entailment from conjunction is always possible in logic. That is, if S_1 & S_2 is true, then S_1 is true alone, and S_2 is true alone, and either may be asserted independent-

ly. Such is not the case with language, alas.

[6]It is interesting to note here that the common short forms of (26) and (27) (respectively, (66) and (67)), are not good in this context, although they are in many others:

(66) Mary writes.
(67) Mary teaches.

In fact, if (67) is offered as the answer to (16) in situation (ii), the questioner has reason to feel that he has been insulted, or that he has been the victim of a joke. The first feeling arises from the questioner's understanding that the person answering the question with (67) feels that his answer is relevant, and that the questioner does not know that Mary teaches, an insult to his intelligence; or that the person answering the question means to contrast Mary's occupation with the questioner's, an insult to his professional competence (if he is a teacher)--something like: "Mary teaches, but you couldn't be expected to know anything about that", or "Mary teaches, unlike some people I could name." The feeling of being involved in a joke (by far the more common interpretation one would make, I think) arises from the typical humorous device of answering a question which is strictly correct, and may even be appropriate in certain circumstances, but which is inappropriate in the given circumstances--in this case, because the questioner presumably knows that Mary teaches, given the context; a responsive answer would add more details.

[7]Note that in these situations, (66) and (67) can substitute for (26) and (27). There is no context in either situation which provides this information to the questioner.

[8]In fact, there do seem to be situations in which a Relative Normal Practice Criterion operates. Consider:

(viii) Joe washes dishes during normal working hours, and since he is relatively well-educated and a native speaker of Gwamba-Mamba, he works for Berlitz on the weekends, teaching his native language intensively. Assume his level of income is approximately equal from each job, so that the Relative Income Criterion does not apply; the Notoreity Criterion would seem not to apply either.

Then the Social Value Criterion would predict that (68) and not (69) would be the appropriate single discription of Joe's occupation:

(68) Joe teaches Gwamba-Mamba.
(69) Joe washes dishes.

But in fact, (68) is inappropriate, while (69) is appropriate. This seems to be brought about by the fact that intensive teaching done only on weekends does not fall within the scope of the "normal mode" of teaching, and therefore is eliminated from consideration, unless it is the only means of support. It is not clear whether this should be ascribed to some putative Relative Normal Practice Criterion, or whether condition C will eliminate it as failing to measure up to start with. If we can conceive of a society wherein all teaching must be done on weekends (or even where all language teaching must be), then (68) becomes appropriate, in fact more appropriate than (69), showing that the Social Value Criterion has taken control, over again.

[9]We can safely ignore here such recent poets as Carl Sandburg and Robert Frost, who have achieved fame; for our purposes, the normal situation will do.

[10]Note that, first, (36) contains an agent nominal, rather than an occupational generic; this is, I think, irrelevant, except to drive home the fact that the distinctions and criteria noted here are not restricted to the use of generics; and second, that the notoreity attached to (36) devolves upon the occupation itself, not the individual person who practices it--Zelda may be known only to a comparative few, but the occupation she practices is a notorious one; thus, fame is not necessary, provided other conditions are met.

[11]There is one further type of condition which should be mentioned here. In certain cases, if the performance of one occupation is implicit in, dependent upon, or customarily associated with the practice of another, then the Notoreity Criterion and the Social Value Criterion fail to apply, and the Relative Income Criterion becomes the deciding factor. Some illustrations:

(ix) Jerry is a linguistics professor who has written some books on linguistics. The books are well-known, but since the audience is so small, he does not derive much income from his writings, although he has become quite famous, and not only among linguists.

The Notoreity Criterion should force us to describe his occupation by (70), but in fact, providing the Relative Income Criterion applies, (71) is as good, if not better:

(70) Jerry writes about linguistics.
(71) Jerry teaches linguistics.

This seems to be the case because it is, if not customary, at least encouraged and not at all surprising that a teacher

of a subject should write books about his subject.

(x) Wanda is a model who is also a prostitute. She makes more modeling than peddling. The Notoreity Criterion would seem to require, as it did for (vii) (at least for some), that we describe Wanda's occupation as being a prostitute. But (72) seems equally good, somehow. Apparently it is not felt as surprising that a model might be a prostitute, since both occupations have something in common--each trades on a woman's sexual attractiveness. Therefore, the simple statement in (72) is at least as appropriate as that in (73):

(72) Wanda is a model.
(73) Wanda is a prostitute.

[12]Finally, there is one occupation which springs easily to mind that seems to break all the rules, namely that described in (74):

(74) Fred is a student.

Note, first, that (74) is an appropriate answer to (16), even though it is not true that being a student earns any income. I believe that this exception is due to the fact that while one is a student, one is not expected to have any income--studying is intended (in our society, at least) to prepare one for an income-producing occupation, and it is fondly believed, even by those who should know better, that what one earns while in school is a step up which will earn the student more when he starts to work. That is, the income is deferred, but no less real for that. It is understood in (74), I think, that Fred's occupation is a temporary one, something we have not encountered in any of the other occupationals we have studied.

[13]A further illustration of the Notoreity Principle: a Mafia chief whose interests are 90% legal is still a mobster if 10% of his income comes from illicit sources, rather than a businessman.

[14]These are basically the same sentences presented in Lawler (1972) ; they are useful chiefly in illustrating the problem, and in providing counterexamples to any easily profferable hypothesis. As can be seen, they show very little in the way of generalizations about the phenomenon; further analysis along the lines of Chapter II might be useful, but the little work I have done along these lines suggests that this phenomenon is vastly more complicated than that dealt with in the previous chapter.

[15]There is for some speakers a reading associated with (58) which (61) does not possess, first pointed out to me by R. Lakoff, to the effect that (58) seems to at least invite the inference (if not entail) that Frank has, at some time, actually spoken German, while (61) is usable both in this (the usual) case, and in the case where Frank is the certified product of a language training course which does not actually afford its students an opportunity to speak; in this case, the potentiality exists, but there is no reference to past activity. While this accords well with our notions of generics, as opposed to modals, I regret that I do not share this intuition, thus leaving myself with a far more difficult construction to analyze (and one which I have so far not succeeded in doing). For me, (58) and (61) are synonymous on one reading of (58), and there is no reading of (61) (in the sense of can=able) which is not synonymous with (58).