



Grammaticalized Perspectives in Discourse

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1. Introduction

Many efforts have been made to explain the regularities found between verbs' meanings and the syntactic constructions allowed for those verbs. It could be reasonably expected and in fact shown that the semantic properties of lexical items largely determine the syntactic frames in which they occur. Further research may bring about more elaborate understanding of the relationship between lexical meanings and syntactic structure. This paper, however, explores other sources of semantic information relevant to the linkage between syntax and semantics in consideration of certain difficulties which are encountered in approaches based on intrinsic lexical meanings.

One of those difficulties is associated with alternations in the expressions of predicates' arguments, or diathesis alternations. In the so-called locative alternation, for instance, we have not yet given a systematic explanation to the linguistic fact that only a particular group of verbs allow such alternation, though some detailed yet unsystematic analyses have been proposed (cf. Jackendoff 1990, Pinker 1989, Rappaport and Levin 1988, and others). For example, of the three verbs *pour*, *spray*, and *fill*, only *spray* allows locative alternation.

- (1) a. I pour water into the glass.
b. *I pour the glass with water.

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- (2) a. I sprayed paint onto the statue.
 b. I sprayed the statue with paint.
- (3) a. *I fill water into a glass.
 b. I fill a glass with water.

What distinguishes *pour* and *spray* on the one hand and *spray* and *fill* on the other? The problem to be noted is that the semantic characterization of an alternating verb so far proposed is confined to lexical description and carries 'duality.' By 'duality' we mean that two separate cases are merely combined in characterizing *spray*, for example, the two cases corresponding to (2a) and (2b) in the above example (cf. Rappaport and Levin 1988, Carrier and Randall 1992, and others).

Furthermore, a question may be raised as to what determines which construction is selected from a set of alternatives. Again, the lexical characterization of either verbs or nouns in direct object cannot finalize the selection of a construction. This is evidenced by (4), which cannot be given a final interpretation so far as it is based only on the lexical properties of *load* and *car*. The direct object in (4) could be identical with that of either (5a) or (5b).

- (4) They loaded the cars in a hurry.
- (5) a. They loaded the cars onto the ship in a hurry.
 b. They loaded the cars with kids in a hurry.

It seems to have been tacitly assumed that the representation of grammatical knowledge should include the lexical designation of available alternations but not what triggers the use of one and not the other construction in actual discourse. This separation, however, begs the question: the selection of one particular construction cannot always be

finalized by the lexicalized properties of words alone. Allowed syntactic frames are to be lexically designated but the explanation of an actual occurrence appears to require some additional factors beside its lexicalized properties. In Section 2, we are going to discuss such factors and propose a new grammatical concept called Entity-Relating Perspective.

Section 3 will propose and examine three specific Entity-Relating Perspectives: Affecting, Contacting, and Locating. Their validity will be discussed from the viewpoint of the capability of distinguishing constructions. Section 4, focusing the opposite side of Perspectives, will discuss shared Perspectives and how they work in determining what goes beyond static lexical description.

2. Entity-Relating Perspectives as a Grammatical Concept

Unless we take into account the semantic properties of the direct objects, we cannot differentiate (6) and (7):

(6) *Phil swept the crumbs. (Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998:120)

(7) Phil swept the floor.

One possible way to explain the difference between these is to classify the noun phrases according to the semantic features of their head nouns. The difference between *the crumbs* and *the floor* could be attributed to that between the semantic features <movable object> and <place>, for instance. However, this approach is questionable in regard to its generality. First, if the feature <movable object> is applicable only to *sweep* or similar kinds of verbs, the present classification is quite limited in nature. Secondly, it is not certain whether these

particular features are appropriate to distinguishing all the cases that fall into this type of pairs.

The more serious problem arises when we see (8):

(8) Phil swept the crumbs into the corner.

Such a fully grammatical sentence tells us that the semantic compatibility of the direct object alone cannot be a valid constraint. Furthermore, it poses a problem connected with the semantic status of adjuncts. They are generally not part of predicates' argument structure and not syntactically obligatory, yet in this case the prepositional phrase *into the corner* in (8) is an indispensable semantic element. This problem also means that we cannot give *sweep* a single lexical description in that the semantic constraint on its object differs according to whether it cooccurs with a prepositional phrase.

Faced with these problems, we propose a new level of grammatical description¹, which characterizes how entities are conceptually related in expressing an event. In terms of what we call Entity-Relating Perspective, we characterize the semantic relation between the entities denoted by the subject, object, and other conceptually significant phrases connected to a predicate. What is accounted for at this level is determined by what distinction should be made in distinguishing syntactic constructions.

Entities related at this level of grammatical description have corresponding elements in linguistic expressions. Those elements are embraced

1 The notion of Lexical Conceptual Structure is regarded as a variety of lexical designation. The idea of template augmentation proposed by Rappaport Hovav & Levin (1998) is considered to be of the same category.

in noun phrases in subject and object positions in a simple case, and an Entity-Relating Perspective corresponds to the semantic aspect of a subject-object relation in such cases. This kind of correspondence, however, is not always established as we will discuss it later in Section 4.

Perspectives proposed here are similar to supersegmental phonemes overlaying segmental phonemes, or the concept of information structure of Lambrecht (1994). They overlay the grammatical relations in a sentence and constitute part of grammar in the sense that available perspectives are constrained language-specifically.

It is also to be noted that the combined conceptual content of an Entity-Relating Perspective is not a mere addition of the lexical information given by participating lexical items. The way particular aspects of meanings are extracted is similar to the way the Telic and Formal roles are extracted from a single lexical form as discussed in Pustejovsky (1995:89).

- (9) a. a bright bulb
 b. an opaque bulb
- (10) a. a fast typist
 b. a male typist

The adjective *bright* in (9a) refers to what function the bulb has, or its Telic role, while *opaque* refers to the Formal role of the bulb. In a similar way, the type referred to in context is different between the *typist* in (10a) and the *typist* in (10b). While the former picks up the functional aspect of a typist, the latter sees its formal aspect. This kind of observations tells us that individually isolated, static semantics of lexical items are incapable of characterizing phrases in context.

In the case of the interaction between a verb and its object, some

particular aspect of the meaning of a verb is extracted to determine the type of a relation among the relevant entities. An Entity-Relating Perspective identifies the type in which entities are related in a particular linguistic expression.

3. Affecting, Contacting, and Locating

As we discussed at the beginning of Section 2, the difference between (6) and (7) requires some new approach. We assume here that (7) realizes one of Entity-Relating Perspectives, Affecting, which is defined in (11), while (6) fails to establish any semantically sound Affecting relation between the entities which supposedly constitute an meaningful event.

(11) Definition of Affecting:

Entity₁ is held responsible for a change of state of Entity₂.

The Affecting relation is exemplified by (7) above. In (7), the two entities in a situation, Phil and the floor, are depicted to have a relation in which Phil is responsible for changing the condition of the floor, the manner and effect being characterized by the verb *sweep*. On the other hand, the sentence (6) above is judged ungrammatical because it is extremely difficult to establish an Affecting relation between Phil and the crumbs. This is evidenced by the fact that if we stretch our imagination and regard the tiny surface area of a crumb as a place to be swept over, then we reach the judgment of grammaticality of (6).

The anomalous sentence (6) turns perfectly acceptable when added with a prepositional phrase as shown in (8). The sentence (8) sounds perfect because an Affecting relation is understood without any unusual

imagination. It is to be noted, however, that the affected entity is not explicitly expressed in (8), where a table or something is implied as the place which undergoes a change. Instead, (8) only states the process of sweeping, in which the crumbs are contacted by Phil. Thus (8) could be said to represent another Perspective called Contacting as defined in (12).

(12) Definition of Contacting:

Entity₁ comes into physical, perceptual, or mental contact with Entity₂.

The action denoted by *sweep* is considered to presuppose a Contacting relation between an action-initiating entity and another entity whose change in position immediately results in a change of state of the third entity, which is after all affected by the action-initiating entity. In the example (8), Phil contacts the crumbs and changes their spatial position, thus clearing a place, which is the center, as opposed to the corner, of the third entity, which is not explicitly expressed in the sentence.

Contacting and Affecting are considered to be in a metonymic relation. In other words, Affecting could be expressed as an inevitable extension of Contacting. The sentence (8) expresses an Affecting relation by referring to a Contacting relation which is conceptually closely associated with the final condition of a certain location.

The relation between the crumbs and the corner in the event described by (8) may be called Locating. It is defined as follows:

(13) Definition of Locating:

Entity₁ is located at Entity₂ in terms of space, standards of measurement, or abstract state.

The Perspective supervising (8) is then considered to be the combination of Contacting and Locating, which is generally behind what Goldberg (1995) calls the caused-motion construction. In this construction, the two relations are united to compose one event.

The conceptual difference between a Contacting+Locating relation and an Affecting relation is grammaticalized as shown in the following examples (Goldberg 1995:166).

- (14) a. Sam coaxed Bob into the room. (Contacting+Locating)
 b. *Sam encouraged Bob into the room.
- (15) Sam coaxed/frightened/lured the mouse out of its hiding place.
 (Contacting+Locating)
- (16) Sam encouraged/convincing/persuaded/instructed him to go into the
 room. (Affecting)

Goldberg (1995) argues that the *encourage* group above entails that the entity denoted by the direct object makes a cognitive decision and does not allow the caused-motion construction as shown in (14b). The distinction Goldberg makes in terms of the presence or absence of a cognitive decision coincides with the difference between Affecting and Contacting. One perceives the relation between Sam and Bob as Affecting when Bob is affected by Sam in some mental way such as changing or finalizing his mind. This contrasts with the Contacting+Locating case, in which a change of Bob's mental state is not put into perspective and Bob is described as undergoing some locational change as a physical entity. The fact that mental changes are irrelevant is shown in (15), where the direct object is not a human. Notice that the verb *frighten*, for example, expresses Affecting when it is used without a location PP. Thus the '+Locating' part of the

Contacting+Locating complex is essential for this particular construction to be used. In other words, the recognition of the relation Contacting, which may metonymically imply Affecting, is coupled with the perception that a certain motion is perceived as central and put into the Contacting+Locating conceptual frame. This seems to be an intrinsic characteristic of the Contacting+Locating relation, which is to be distinguished from a mere Contacting relation².

4. Shared Perspectives in Discourse

Contextual information may be given in different forms. One is syntactic and superficially observable, while another is conceptual and implicitly contained in adjacent expressions. Take the verb *lease* for example. It means both that the subject grants possession of something and that the subject holds something under a lease. When it accompanies a *to* or *from* phrase, the role played by the entity denoted by the subject unambiguously reveals itself. Otherwise, it seems logically ambiguous between the two possible interpretations. In reality, however, the hearer/reader has little difficulty in identifying the role of the subject. The following examples show that nearby predicates help determine the relevant perspective.

- (17) The family home was the last tangible talisman of their pride and, rather than relinquish it, the Chamfers leased the building.

[BNC³/*The Prince*. Brayfield, Celia. London: Chatto & Winds Ltd,

2 Examples expressing a mere Contacting relation include *Bill crossed the bridge*, *Jane touched the button*, and others.

3 BNC stands for *British National Corpus* and '[BNC/' indicates that the cited example is taken from BNC (<http://thetis.bl.uk/>).

1990]

- (18) He leased a field in the area and turned it into a cricket ground.
[BNC/*The Cricketer*. Tunbridge Wells: Sporting Magazines & Pubs,
1992]

In (17), *the Chamfers*, the subject of *leased*, is also understood as the subject of another verb *relinquish* according to the knowledge of English grammar. But the knowledge of grammar tells more than that. If the clause *the Chamfers leased the building* is given without any context, it is ambiguous between the interpretation that the Chamfers is the owner of the building and that it is the user of the building. On the other hand, the subject of *relinquish* implies that it has been the holder of the building. This piece of information is considered to disambiguate the last clause of (17) and we argue that this kind of linkage between the two clauses is held via shared Perspective. It should be at a conceptual level to link the holder of something with the owner of that thing and Perspectives are conceptual in nature, which provides for the ground of conceptual parallelism.

Like (17), (18) also shows that two perspectives are coupled to come up with a conceptual link that someone who works on a field should be the user rather than the owner of it in the event of leasing. The logical aspect of this inference is not derivable from the grammatical structure alone, and needs some conceptual framework, though the latter is closely related with the grammatical structure.

The background knowledge about Sony could take part in the Perspective that overlays the clause *Sony had leased three floors* in (19). This is possible because Perspectives are conceptual in nature.

- (19) Several firms had booked hotel suites in the Park Lane and Marble

Arch areas and Sony had leased three floors in Landmark House in Euston Road. [BNC/ *Practical Fishing*. Peterborough, Cambs: EMAP Pursuit Publishing Ltd, 1992]

The extralinguistic knowledge that Sony should not be a real estate company suggests that it is not the owner of the floors but the user of them. This judgment is also confirmed by the parallelism drawn from the context that firms are engaged in a certain activity other than owing something. This aspect of conceptual characterization is usually not associated with the expression *to book hotel suites*, but in the case of (19), the perspective overlaying the first clause interacts with that over the second clause and the former perspective helps identify the role of Sony in its leasing activity.

In this way, the linguistic shortcomings that the direction of ownership is not lexically fixed in the cases of *lease*, *rent*, and others are compensated by the availability of shared Perspectives in discourse. Another case which shows a similar conceptual function of Perspectives is found with *dust*. The transitive use of *dust* allows its grammatical object to bear two opposing meanings: a place to be cleared of dust or a place to be covered with something like dust. In an actual context, however, these seemingly ambiguous interpretations almost always do not surface. A phrase in the latter sense usually accompanies a *with* phrase to indicate what covers the place denoted by the object. On the other hand, a clause with the former meaning takes no particular prepositional phrases, yet the meaning is unambiguous as in (20) and (21).

(20) Everything is very clean, neat and tidy, dusted and polished.

[BNC/ *Leonard Cohen: prophet of the heart*. Dorman, Lorraine S and Rawlins, Clive L. London: Omnibus Press, 1990]

- (21) She hoovered and dusted the sitting room. [BNC/ *Passing on*.
Lively, P. London: Penguin Group, 1990]

The logical object *everything* in (20) cannot be specified lexically as to the above-mentioned ambiguity, but the intended meaning of *dusted* is clear because of the semantic nature of the paralleling Perspectives over *clean, neat and tidy* and *polished*. In (21), the clause with *dusted* shares the same Perspective with the clause headed by *hoovered* and thus the role of the sitting room is disambiguated.

Since Perspectives are conceptually constituted, an entity which bears a central relation may not have any individuated lexical forms. The following example (23) shows such a case.

Before examining (23), let us confirm that (22) is ambiguous as to whether John is the landlord or tenant of the cottage. The syntactic frame shared by *rent, lease, sublet*, and others does not designate whether the grammatical subject is a lending entity or a borrowing one.

- (22) John rented the cottage.

Although such ambiguity does not arise when adjuncts like *from/to* phrases cooccur, they are not obligatory and in fact do not always accompany these verbs. To be noted is the observation that this kind of ambiguity is usually not felt in understanding an actual case in context. In the following example, his aunt is immediately interpreted as a tenant, based on the context.

- (23) He had paid three pence at the booking office for his ticket and, after waiting ten minutes or so on the cold and draughty platform for the next London-bound train, he had arrived at

Christchurch some ten minutes later to run through torrential rain toward the group of cottages which flanked the open park in the town centre. He was not certain which cottage his aunt rented during the winter. In the spring and summer she lived in a cottage on the banks of the river Stour just below Tuckton bridge. Mark had spent many idyllic summer days sailing and fishing with his brothers and his aunt on the beautiful river, but had never been to her winter cottage. [BNC/ *Man at the sharp end*. Kilby, M. Lewes, East Sussex: The Book Guild Ltd, 1991]

In the above discourse 'he' appears to be going to visit his aunt and the reader can infer from that context that there must be a resident used by his aunt and thus his aunt should be the tenant of a cottage rather than the landlady.

Now, the peculiarity to be noticed in this example is the lack of any specific lexical items in the discourse that correspond to his aunt before the portion with a waved underline. Yet, the above-mentioned inference is available under such conditions. This indicates the possibility that the information serving as input to a Perspective can be really conceptual without any direct link to lexical items.

Although the notion of Entity-Relating Perspective, as a grammatical concept, is neutral with regard to the dichotomy between speech production and speech perception, the above example helps us appreciate the reality that the writer of (23) knows, even before writing it, that what 'he' is looking for is a cottage where his aunt lives. The intended meaning of *rent* is already there in the writer/speaker's mind at the time of using it without having mentioned any formal clues. This means that even in simplified cases of (24), the speaker of (24a) knows that John is the owner of the cottage even before adding the adjunct *to a student*.

If the speaker does not adjoin the *to* phrase for some reason, s/he may nevertheless hold the same perspective as to the relation between John and the cottage. In the same vein, the speaker of (24b) knows that John is the user of the cottage.

- (24) a. John rented the cottage to a student.
b. John rented the cottage from a widow.

Each of the three participants in a renting event has a specific role: owner, user, and object. These roles may be generalized by using what is called thematic roles such as Agent and Patient. Contrary to the conventional approach to describe verbs' syntactic behavior in terms of thematic roles, we assume here that the argument structure of a verb parallels how the speaker arranges those participating entities in his or her own perspective. Such arrangement is lexically constrained, but not lexically determined. Speakers' Perspectives are realized only in discourse.

In (23) above, there are no superficial markers, including syntactic ones, which indicate the relation between his aunt and the cottage, but the speaker's intent or the reader's interpretation is unambiguous. Such a case is accounted for, in our approach, by the fact that the speaker's perspective may be identified in the context, which depicts the cottage as a place to be visited. Such information, of course, cannot be derived from any dictionaries and the lexical designation is incompatible with the nature of such information.

5. Conclusion

Although lexical properties predict much of syntax, we see a certain limit to the capability of lexical designation. Noting the information gap between the argument structure of a predicate and its syntactic and semantic realization in discourse, we proposed a new grammatical notion: Entity-Relating Perspective. In consideration of the nature of unsolved problems, the proposed Perspectives conceptually characterize the entities and their relations among themselves in an event to be depicted. The addition of a new level to the grammatical representations is expected to reveal further generalization, though there still remain a lot of details to be rectified.

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