LANGUAGE STRUCTURE IN MODERN LINGUISTICS IN ENGLISH: A COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

In modern linguistics, the study of meaning or associate mantis has remained less developed compared with the advances made in the studies of phonology and syntax. For instance right from Leonard Bloomfield to Noam Chomsky, modern Linguists have set aside the study of semantics in preference to their investigations into the phonology and syntax of language.

Linguists like Lakoff, Ross, Fillmore, McCauley, Halliday, Pike, S. Lamb etc. have attempted to include the study of meaning in the models of language they forwarded. Thus the study of meaning in language structure has remained a desideratum.

An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse the different shades of meaning across, the most frequently used verbs of motion in English which constitute a single semantic field. The concept of semantic field is explained and illustrated, followed by an explanation of the process of componential analysis employed to decompose the meaning of different member verbs in the semantic field of verbs of motion in English. Finally, the implications for English language teaching are also explained and illustrated.

VERBS OF MOTION IN ENGLISH: A COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS
Introduction

Modern linguists have conceived the primary function of grammar is to relate sound and meaning and to show how meaning or conceptual world is transformed into utterances or sentences in language. Different theories of grammar and language models have been forwarded to fulfill this goal of grammar. However, the demarcation between semantics and syntax has not been well established because the internal structures of meanings imply certain syntactic properties which should be given proper representation in the grammatical model. For example syntactically indexed arguments of a verb denote the required or acceptable noun phrases and their syntactic function. Furthermore, the selection restrictions impose additional conditions on these co-constituents. Therefore, an essential part of the syntactic behaviour of the lexical element has to be derived directly from its semantic representation.

Even, the syntactic deep structure representation is directly dependent on its semantic structures. It is in this sense that the approach of Generative Grammar seems to be acceptable (as opposed to Chomskyian Generative Transformational Grammar) because this model of language recognizes no other deep structure than the semantic structure on which transformations operate to deride the surface structure, and not on the deep syntactic structure. Lakoff, Ross, Fillmore and McCawley have shown that there is no need to setup an artificial intermediate level, viz. the syntactic deep structure. "It is an artificial intermediate level between the empirically discoverable 'Semantic deep structure', a level the properties of which have more to do with the methodological commitments of grammarians

2270

than with the nature of human languages." (Fillmore 1968: 88) "Ifthe level of structure to which transformations can be most simply applied… has no systematic interconnections with any other facts of language, there does not seem to be any valid motivationfor using the level 'deep structure' for it." (Lakoff and Ross, 1967:63) Similarly, "The semantic and syntactic systems of a language comprise the principles that relate conceptual structures and surface structures. For every sentence of a language, these principles specify the relationship between its form as a string of morpheme and its conceptual import" (Langacker, 1968:89) In the same vein Chafe (1970) argues that the 'ideas' exists before and outside of and independently of a language.

Chafe maintains that ideas or concepts are real entities in people's minds, having some physical, electrochemical reality in the human nervous system. The fact that semantics or the study of meaning is an indispensable part of any linguistic investigation has become fully established. However, in modern linguistics the study of meaning or semantics has remained less developed in contrast with the studies of phonology and syntax. Yet linguists have made significant studies in semantics. Two major contributions may be noted in this context. They are a) Semantic fields b) Componential analysis of meaning.

VERBS OF MOTION

- Process

Verbs of Motion indicate any kind of movement as opposed to standstill or resting position. Motion is basically physical and its other implied or figurative meanings are instances of extension of meaning.

The process expressed by a Motion verb requires at least one participant. The participant may be Human or Non-human, Animate or Inanimate. The term Agent stands for the performer of a particular action denoted by a verb and the term patient for the affected. The term participant implied both and its reference is to the process concerned.

- Componential Features

The process involved in motion may be described as movement from one point to another in space; within or around one and the same point of space or with reference to a single point of space.That is, motion implies the presence or absence of a certain Direction which may be of different kinds. To define Direction, a particular spatial point is taken as Reference. This Reference may be Goal - oriented (+Goal) or participant-oriented (-Goal). +Goal includes the speaker's or hearer's standpoint while –Goal refers to that of the participant (Agent/Patient). Another Component isMode of motion. It may be, for instance, Swift or Slow or neither swift nor slow. The verb 'run' is marked for swiftness whereas the verb 'crawl' is marked for 'slowness' while the verb 'move' is unmarked for either. Thus the componential features of the verbs of motion are as follows:

Reference may be marked or unmarked. If it is marked, it may refer to the Goal (+Goal) or may not (-Goal). +Goal comprises the features speaker and hearer; either of them may be specified + or -. If Goal is marked +speaker, it means the Reference is in terms of the speaker's point ofview. If it is marked +Hearer, the Reference is to the Hearer's point of view. If a verb is marked – Goal, the Reference is neither to the speaker nor to the Hearer, but to the participant.

Direction is mostly dependent upon Reference. It may be marked or unmarked. It is marked either for space or for plane. Space comprises the features To, From, Up and Away each of which, in turn,may be + or -. Plane includes the features vertical (+ or -) and Horizontal (+ or -).

Mode refers to the kind of movement. It is either marked or unmarked. It is either marked or unmarked. It is marked for Manner and Means. Manner comprises the features swift, slow, repetitive, sudden and volition, each of which may be either + or -. Means covers the features Foot, Body, Belly, and Air. Each of these features may be + or -.

Each of the verbs of motion carries all this information. That is, information about the agent, about the agent-patient relationship if there is a patient, about the spatial point of reference, about the spatial direction and about the spatial direction and about the mode of motion. The semantic description of a motion verb has to present this information as

2271

opposed to that of the other motion verbs.
In the componential feature specification of a verb only those features which distinguish it from the others ('Minimal features') are included. Fig 1 presents a diagrammatic relationship of these componential features.
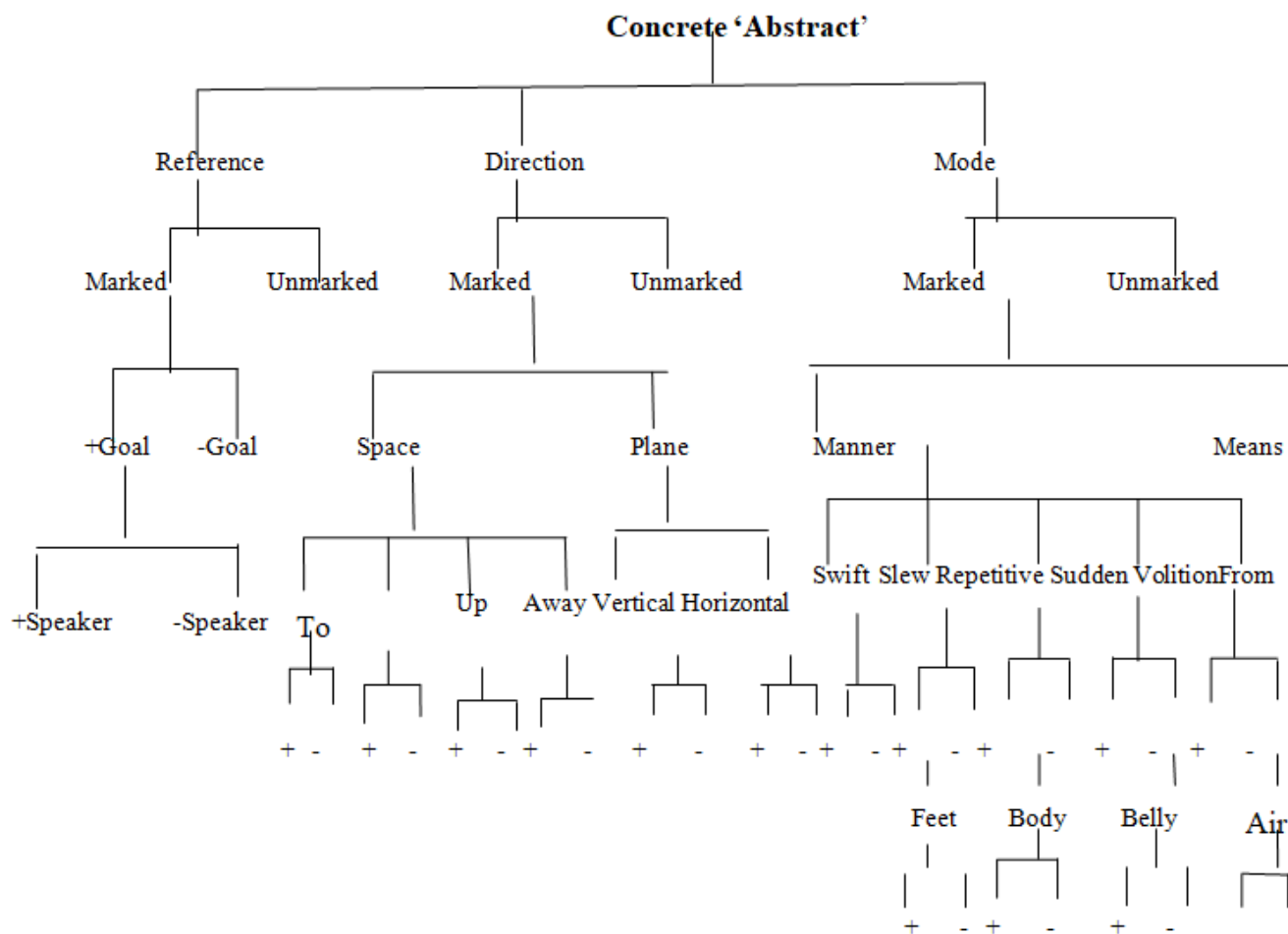
The Verbs:

Go	Climb	Fly	Move	Come	Jump	Crawl
	Leave	Hop	Creep	Walk	Trot	Rise
	Run	Gallop	Fall			

Contrasts

<u>Go</u>   v   <u>Come</u>   v   <u>Leave</u>

Go and Come are logically antonyms while leave and Go are synonyms. A comparison and contrast will throw light on their semantic composition. Consider the following sentences.

1.   He has gone to China.
1a.   He has come to China.
*1b. He has left to China.
1c. He has left for China.

'He is now in China, or on his way to China' will be a paraphrase of (1) but (1a) cannot be its paraphrase. (1c) can be a paraphrase of (1) with a slight change of stress in meaning. (1c) is different from (1) in the sense that it lays emphasis not on the Goal (China), but on the place thatthe participant has left. In fact (1c) is a contraction of (1d).

1d. He has left (England/India/America) for China.

This kind of expansion is not possible with 1. 1b is not unacceptable syntactically for this reason. 1a gives a different meaning altogether in that it specifies the reference. There, it is implied that the speaker identifies himself with China and the participant also has come to China. In 1 and 1c there is no such reference as to the speaker's situation.
2. Shall we go by train or by steamer?
2a. Shall we leave by train or by steamer?2b.
 Shall we come by train or by steamer?

     2. Does not make any spatial reference while in 2a. 'Leave' implies 'leave the place where the speaker and the
 hearer are present.

3.   I must be going now
3a. I must be leaving now
*3b. I must be coming now
3c. I must be coming now

3b is semantically anomalous because 'come' implies 'here' or –Away and also it is Goal- oriented in reference. That is, somebody or something other than the speaker 'comes to the place where the speaker is', but not the speaker himself. Therefore 3b is semantically unacceptable. The difference between 3 and 3a is similar to that in 1 and 1d.

4. I wish this pain would go.
4a. I wish this pain would leave me.
*4b. I wish this pain would come.

4 and 4a are synonymous. Here, their difference is rather syntactic than semantic. Leave, being both transitive and intransitive, syntactically requires an object in this context. Also Go in 4 does not imply any physical motion, but implies disappearance of pain or healing. The syntactic difference between Go and Leave is, too partly semantic. Go does not allow a 'place object' whereas Leave allows one.

4b is semantically anomalous because a person is likely to wish for the good things in his favour but not the unpleasant states such as pain. Since Come implies 'near' or –Away a person is unlikely to wish for any pain to come near and in fact itself upon him. Secondly, Come has a restricted semantic range; Go, on the other hand, is flexible and covers a wide semantic range. One can say
But not
5. It goes without saying.

*5a. It comes without saying.

Nevertheless, Go cannot occur at all places where Come does.Compare 6 and 6a.

6.   Be coming. ('I request you to come here often)
6a/ Be going.
7. Go away!

*7a. Leave away!
7b. Come away!

7a is semantically irregular and therefore syntactically impossible because Leave includes the features +Away, + From in its semantic composition and does not allow 'away' again syntactically.
7b is semantically different from 7 because come is marked for the referential component whereas Go is unmarked for reference.

8.   Winter has gone and spring is here.
*8a. Winter has left and spring is here.
*8b. Winter has come and spring is here.

In 8 'has gone' mean 'ended'. 8a is not acceptable because Leave is marked for reference, +participant. 8b is semantically anomalous being self-contradictory.

 9. Don't go doing that!
10. He went red with anger.
11. Fish soon goes bad in hot weather.
12. Tiverton went Liberal at the by-election.
13. When did America go dry?

In the sentences above Go conveys meanings which are idiomatic or figurative or extensional in nature. Come and Leave cannot express these meanings.

These three verbs take an Agent marked Animate (i.e. +Animate or –Animate).
Thus the following feature configurations will account for the semantic difference between Go, Come and Leave.

Go	Come	Leave
U Ref	M Ref (+Goal)	M Ref (-Goal)
M Dir (+Away)	M Dir (-Away)	M Dir (+Away, +From)
U Mode	U Mode	U Mode
(Animate Agent)	(Animate Agent)	(Animate Agent)

Walk V Run
Walk is marked –Swift and –Slow in mode whereas Run is marked for swiftness (+Swift). Walk is restricted in meaning and cannot be substituted for Run whereas the converse is possible with difference of meaning. Compare the following sentences.

 14. We walked three miles.
 15. We ran three miles.
16.   How old are the babies when they learn to walk?
17.   He was walking up and down the station platform.
18. How old are the babies when they learn to run?
18a. He was running up and down the station platform.
The sentences with Run, 15, 16a, 17a may be rare but they are not unacceptable either semantically or syntactically.

2274

However, Walk can replace Run in a few instances syntactically, but with a change of meaning.

19. I can't run fast.
19a. I can't walk fast.
20. The children walked out to see what was happening.
*20a. The children walked out to see what was happening.

19a is semantically anomalous, because walk expresses an idiomatic meaning, 'walk out' being a phrasal verb. Thus 20 is acceptable.

21. The men in the factory walked out yesterday.
21a. She came running towards me.
21b. She came walking towards me. (rare)
22. She ran to meet us.
*22a. She walked to meet us.

Walk is syntactically similar to 'Run' but semantically different.

23. Horses should be walked for a while after a race.
24. He walked his horse up the ill.
25. He put his arm round me and walked me off.
26. You will walk me off my feet.

As a causative verb Walk means 'cause or make somebody or some animal like horse walk'.It also implies that the patient is not physically normal or sound as illustrated in 22 to 25. Run, on the other hand, as a causative implied 'cause to move a vehicle such as a car'. This can be observed in the sentences given below.

27. I will rum you up to town.
28. I will run you back home.

In other words, Walk, when used as a transitive requires a patient marked +Animate whereas Run as transitive takes a patient marked –Animate. Walk is more restricted in meaning than Run.

For mode, Walk is marked –Swift, -Slow and +Foot, while run is only marked for swiftness. Walk requires an Animate Agent or patient whereas it may be Animate for run. These semantic distinctions and selectional restrictions are responsible for the acceptable or non-acceptability of the sentences in which they occur. Thus, in terms of selectional restrictions 28 and 29 are unacceptable.

*28. He walked the car into the garage.
*29. He put his around me and ran me off.

 The semantic composition of Walk and Run may be represented as follows:Walk Run

Walk	Run
U Ref	U Ref
U Dir	U Dir
M Mode (- Swift, +Foot)	M Mode ((+swift)
(Animate Agent/Patient)	(Animate Agent/Patient)

Jump V Hop V Trot V Gallop

Jump

30. He jumped to his feet.
31. The dog jumped over the fence.
32. He was jumping up and down in excitement.
33. The manager jumped out of his chair.
34. She jumped into the taxi.
35. The speaker jumped from religion to politics.
36. Jane jumped down her husband's throat.
37. I jumped the horse over the fence.
38. He jumped for joy.
39. Her heart jumped when she heard the news.
40. Gold shares jumped on the Stock Exchange yesterday.
41. He jumped at the offer.
42. Don't jump to conclusion until you read the letter.
43. The teacher jumped (up) on the inattentive pupil.

None of the other three verbs than Jump, viz., Hop, Trot and Gallop can substituted for Jump in the sentence above.

Jump physically involves a movement that is sudden and non-repetitive. It generally requires an Animate Agent with a few exceptions such as 40 where the meaning is obviously figurative. It is marked +up, +vertical, +Horizontal for direction and for mode +Sudden, Repetitive.

Hop

44. Sparrows were hopping about on the lawn.
45. He hurt his left foot and had to hop along.

Trot

46. Well, I must be trotting off home.
47. You trot away!
48. Smith was trotting out his knowledge.
49. He trotted Jane off her legs.

Gallop

50. He galloped across the field.
51. I must gallop through my work.

Here, in the sentences above, the semantic distinctions are more crucial than the syntactic differences because none of them can be a substitute semantically to the other two.

Hop is marked +Vertical, +Horizontal for direction and +Repetitive for mode. Trot is unmarked for direction and for mode it is marked –Swift, -Slow. Gallop is also unmarked for direction and marked +Swift and +Repetitive for mode. All these are unmarked for reference and require an Agent/Patient marked +Animate. Their semantic features may be shown as follows:

Jump	Hop	Trot	Gallop
M Dir	M Dir	U Dir	U Dir (+up, +vertical, +horizontal)
M Mode	M Mode	M Mode	M Mode (+sudden, -repetitive)
	(+repetitive)	(-swift, -slow)	(+swift, +repetitive)

2276

Crawl V Creep

Crawl
52. The snake crawled into the room
53. The wounded soldier crawled into a shell-hole.
54. Don't crawl to your boss.
55. Our train crawled over the damaged bridge.
56. The ground was crawling with ants.
57. She says that the sight of snakes makes her flesh crawl.

Creep
58. The cat crept silently towards the bird.
59. Old age creeps upon one unawares.
60. A feeling of drowsiness crept over him.
61. Ivy had crept over the ruined castle walls.
62. The sight of the cold damp prison cell with rats running about, made her flesh creep.

These two verbs are partially synonymous and hence in 52 and 57 creep can replace crawland vice versa. This is not possible in sentences 53 to 57.

Both crawl and creep are marked +Horizontal and +Vertical for direction. In mode both are marked +Slow and Crawl is marked +Body while Creep is marked +Belly. Crawl always requiresan animate agent whereas it may be animate in the case of Creep. Both are unmarked for reference.

Their minimal destination may be shown as follows:

Crawl   **Creep**

M Mode   M Mode
+Body   +Belly
(Animate Agent)   (Animate Agent)

Rise   V   Fall
Rise and Fall are antonyms in a way look at the following sentences.
63. The wounded man fall and was too weak to rise.
64. His voices rose in angry.
65. His voice fell to a whisper.
66. Mercury is rising.
67. The barometer is falling.
68. The wind is rising.
69. The wind fell during the night.
70. Where does the Nile rise?
71. The river falls into the lake.

But they are not antonyms always as in the following pairs of sentences.

2277

72. The sun rises in the East.
    *73. The sun falls in the west.
74. Darkness fell upon the screen.
    *75. Light rose upon the scene.

Rise itself has a wide range of meaning, but fall has yet a wider range. The main distinction between Rise and Fall is in that the former is marked +up for Direction and for mode it is Volition while the latter is marked +Down for direction and is –Volition for mode. Both can take Animate Agent.

This distinction is borne out in their syntactic co-occurrence possibilities with reard to prepositions or adverbs. Compare the following.

76. He will rise to greatness.
77. He fell into disgrace.

Both of these verbs are unmarked for reference. The semantic components of Rise and Fallmay be represented as follows:

Rise   **Fall**
M Dir (+Up)   M Dir (+Down)
U mode   M Mode (-Volition)

Conclusion

The implication underlying the foregoing componential analysis of the semantic field, the verbs of motion of English is that the learners of English can use English verbs of motion appropriately and meaningfully in their English. For instance such unacceptable, ungrammatical, deviant and nonsensical sentences such as:

*Sherkhan tried to assassinate Mouglis.
*the police hunted the thief.
*the garden is creeping with ants etc.

Such an awareness of the subtle semantic differences across the member verbs of a given semantic field will enable language learners to appreciate the effect of syntax variation and to employ appropriate styles in their own language.

Similar accounts of other semantic verbs of English and also those of nouns can be undertaken by future researcher to make teaching of English as a second or foreign language more effective and purposeful.

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2278

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