The Reversible Core of ObjExp, Location, and *Govern*-type Verbs

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Linking Theories

The Uniformity of Theta-Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH) [1]: thematic roles determine arguments' positions.

Example: THEME → Comp,VP

The Universal Alignment Hypothesis (UAH) [2]: thematic roles determine arguments' **relative** positions.

Example: AGENT ≺ THEME

Linking Problems and Solutions

The Causative/Inchoative Alternation:

(1) a. The sun melted the ice.   b. The ice melted.
        THEME   THEME

Problem (for UTAH): THEME occurs in two different positions.

Solution: More complex syntax → unaccusative hypothesis [3]:

(2) The ice melted *t*.

The Dative Alternation:

(3) a. John sent a book to Mary.
                             GOAL

   b. John sent Mary a book.
                   GOAL

Problem (for U(T)AH): GOAL occurs below and above THEME.

Solution: More complex semantics → [e.g., 4, 5]

(3a)'s goal = (LOCATIVE) GOAL · (3b)'s goal = RECIPIENT

Another Linking Problem

The eventive/stative alternation [6, 7, 8, 9]:

(4) *Object Experiencer Verbs*:
   a. John is (deliberately) amusing Bill.   (Eventive)
   b. John's appearance amuses Bill.   (Stative)

(5) *Location Verbs*:
   a. John covered the screen.   (Eventive)
   b. The blanket covered the screen.   (Stative)

(6) *Govern-type Verbs*:
   a. John protected the gem with a laser grid. (Eventive)
   b. A laser grid protected the gem.   (Stative)

Problem (for UTAH): subjects bear different thematic relationships to the verb in (a) vs. (b), despite appearing in the same structural relationship to it.

Problem (for UAH): *with*-phrase referent is below object in (6a) but appears as subject above object in (6b), despite having the same thematic relationship to the verb and object:

(7) a. John protected every gem$_i$ with its$_i$ laser grid.
   b. * John protected its gem$_i$ with every laser grid$_i$.

(8) Every laser grid$_i$ protected its$_i$ gem.

Solution: More complex syntax → reversible verbs

Contact Information

Observation 1: Optional *With*-Phrases

ObjExp, location, and *govern*-type verbs may all occur in eventive uses with a *with*-phrase.

An eventive sentence with a *with*-phrase entails a stative sentence with the *with*-phrase as its subject.

(9) *ObjExp*:
   John amused Bill with his antics. ⟹
   John's antics amused Bill.

(10) *Location*:
   John covered the screen with the blanket. ⟹
   The blanket covered the screen.

(11) Govern-*type*:
   John protected the gem with a laser grid. ⟹
   A laser grid protected the gem.

Observation 2: Eventive ⟹ Stative

Eventives with *with*-phrases entail statives with that *with*-phrase as subjects (see above).

Eventives without a *with*-phrase entail statives with existentially bound subjects.

(12) *ObjExp*:
   John was amusing Bill. ⟹
   Something amused Bill.

(13) *Location*:
   John covered the screen. ⟹
   Something covered the screen.

(14) Govern-*type*:
   John quickly protected the gem. ⟹
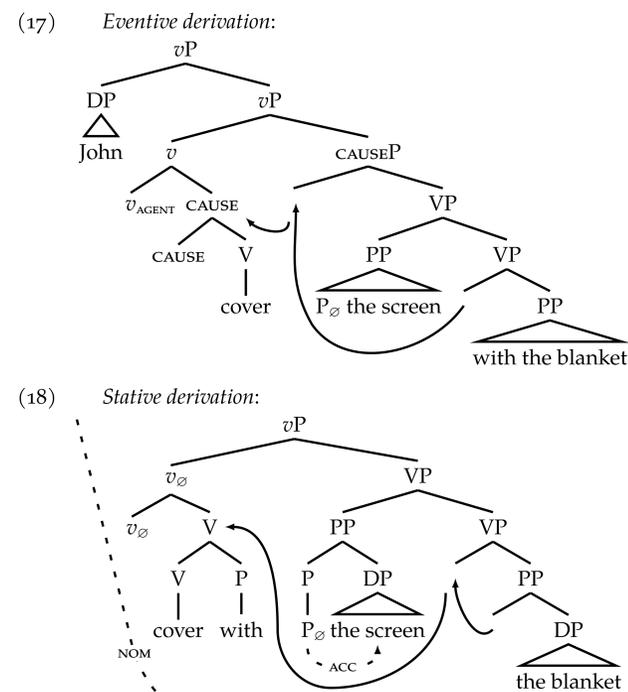   Something protected the gem.

Key Idea: Stative ⊂ Eventive

(15) *Eventive*:
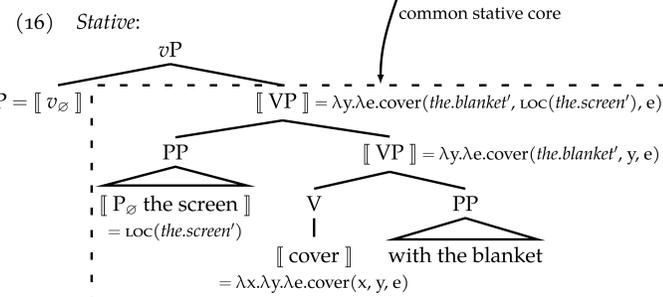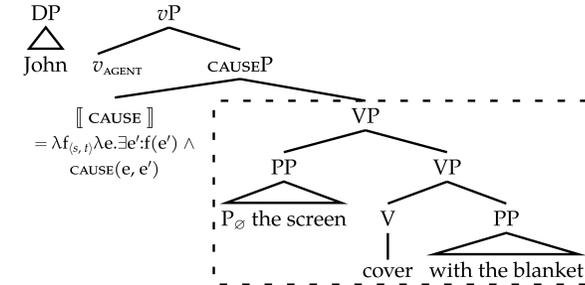
(16) *Stative*:

Deriving the Surface Orders

Spell out rules:

[CAUSE cover] → "cover" (eventive)   (17)

[cover with] → "cover" (stative)   (18)

(17) *Eventive derivation*:

(18) *Stative derivation*:

P∅ = Abstract locative P

Landau [9]: experiencers have locative syntax, are introduced with an (often null) preposition. Semantically, they can be thought of as abstract, mental locations.

(19) John annoyed Bill. ≈
   "John caused annoyance to be at Bill."

Idea: location and *govern*-type verbs are the same. Location verbs encode a relation between the *with*-phrase referent and the location of the object.

(20) John covered the screen with the blanket. ≈
   "John caused the blanket to lay on the screen."

Govern-type verbs encode an abstract locative relation, like with ObjExp verbs:

(21) John protected the gem with a laser grid. ≈
   "John caused the protection of a laser grid to be over the gem."

Acknowledgements

Reversible Verbs and Backwards Binding

In the stative derivation (18), the lower DP "reverses" over the object to appear in subject position. Independent evidence comes from backwards binding (BB) [5, 9, 10, 11]. Known to occur with ObjExp verbs, but only in stative uses.

Not previously noted: BB extends to location and *govern*-type verbs, and again only for eventive and not stative uses.

(22) *Non-Reversible Verbs*: *BB
   a. * Enemies of each other$_i$ killed the men$_i$.
   b. * His$_i$ friend washed every boy$_i$'s car.

(23) *Eventive*: *BB
   a. * Each other$_i$'s friends deliberately annoyed the party-goers$_i$ by blowing smoke in their faces.   (ObjExp)
   b. * A copy of itself$_i$ quickly covered every robot$_i$ with a sheet.   (Location)
   c. * His$_i$ advisors protected every regent$_i$ with a bodyguard.   (Govern-type)

(24) *Stative*: ✓BB
   a. Each other$_i$'s fans annoy the musicians$_i$.   (ObjExp)
   b. A picture of itself$_i$ covered every pail$_i$.   (Location)
   c. Its$_i$ own thick skin protects every whale$_i$.   (Govern-type)

In stative uses, the object initially c-commands the subject. In eventive uses, the subject always c-commands the object.

Two Faces of *With*

With-phrases in the eventive/stative alternation behave similarly to those in the instrument/subject alternation *prima facie*.

(25) a. John covered the screen with the blanket. →
        The blanket covered the screen. (Reversible, END *with*)
    b. John opened the door with the key. →
        The key opened the door.   (Instrument, MEANS *with*)

But these are not the same. With both, only END ≺ MEANS.

(26) a. John covered the hole [with the dirt] [with the shovel].
                              END   MEANS
    b. * John covered the hole [with the shovel] [with the dirt].
                               MEANS   END

Two MEANS *with*s cannot occur together, and nor can two END *with*s, but the combination is possible in (26a).

(27) a. *Two MEANS *with*s:
        *John covered the hole [with the shovel] [with the forklift].
                               MEANS   MEANS
    b. *Two END *with*s:
        *John covered the hole [with the sheet] [with the dirt].
                               END   END

Finally, MEANS *with*s do not occur as subjects of reversible verbs:

(28) John covered the hole with the shovel. ↛
   *The shovel covered the hole.   (under a MEANS *with* reading)

Eventive/stative alternation ≠ instrument/subject alternation

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