

Syntactico-semantic Double Construction in English

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0. Introduction

There are some types of English expressions the meaning of which is more than the simple addition of word meanings and structural meaning. One of the most famous examples is the so-called 'way-construction' such as (1):

(1) John belched his way out of the restaurant.

Sentence (1) means 'John went out of the restaurant belching. The problem is what is the provenance of the meaning 'went.' There are other types of similar expressions though they are not much discussed. The way-construction has already been analyzed by some linguists as is shown below. The aim of this paper is to present a hopefully better analysis of way-construction together with other similar constructions. The new analysis has been helped by drawing upon a comparison with equivalent Japanese expressions where the same phenomenon does not exist. Sentence (1) translates into Japanese as (2):

(2) Zyon wa geppu-o sinagara resutoran-no soto-e
 (John) (TOP) (belch-OBJ) (while doing) (restaurant-of) (outside-DIR)
 deta.
 (went out)

Note: Abbreviations of Japanese particle functions: TOP=topic; OBJ=objective;
 DIR=direction.

As is seen above, the verbal meanings of 'go' and 'belch' are expressed by a single word 'belch' in English, while in Japanese the two meanings are expressed separately by 'geppu-o sinagara' and 'deta.' The amalgamated use in English will be called 'double construction' in this paper. The double construction is not allowed in Spanish either (Talmy, 2000, II. p. 29).

The DOUBLE CONSTRUCTION is thought to have the following structure

John $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{belched} \\ \text{(made)} \end{array} \right]$ his way out of the restaurant.

The original construction 'make one's way + Path-phrase' is an idiomatic expression, and everyone can easily recover the verb 'make' hidden under a surface verb 'belch.' The

recoverability supported by the context is the core of this double construction. Another condition that makes the amalgamation of 'make' and 'belch' possible is the fact that English still retains the characteristics of an inflectional language where a single morph can have more than one function at the same time. For example, 'am' is an amalgamation of 'be,' 'first person,' singular,' 'present tense,' and 'indicative.' On the other hand, such amalgamation is impossible in Japanese which is one of agglutinative languages where each function has to be concatenated with separate morphs in a certain order. One example will suffice here: 'tabe-sase-rare-kake-ta'

tabe	sase	rare	kake	ta.
(eat)	(CAU)	(PAS)	(INC)	(PAST)

Note: CAU=causative; PAS=passive; INC=inchoative; PAST=past tense.

1. Previous treatments of way-construction

1.1 The earliest treatment of this particular expression type as far as the present writer knows is Toyama (1961) in which he analyses the way-construction as the overlapping of a manner verb on the prototype expression to produce a derived variation. The present paper actually has started from this treatment. However, Toyama's treatment has one weak point. He pays no attention to the function of the accompanying context which is crucial to the realization of this construction.

Jackendoff (1992) treats the *way*-construction as a 'constructional idiom.' He says it is 'a kind of "constructional idiom," a specialized syntactic form with an idiomatic meaning, marked by the noun *way*.' This treatment does not explain where the semantic element 'move' comes from.

Goldberg (1995:218) recognizes a polysemous construction and interprets the way construction as an amalgam of the creation construction and the intransitive motion construction. She further says "The way-construction demonstrates the need to recognize *constructional polysemy*, parallel to the polysemy often posited for lexical items and grammatical morphemes." Her idea of amalgam is close to the idea of double construction, but her idea of constructional polysemy is not necessary in the theory of the present paper. The merit of the idea of partial overlapping of meaning in this paper will become clearer as discussion goes on with other types of constructions in the following sections.

Talmy (2000: II-27ff.) discusses the *way*-construction and other types of expressions as the conflation of Motion + Co-Event. The idea is very close to our idea of double construction. However, it seems he does not explain explicitly where the meaning element Motion comes from. It is an assumed element from the context. By the way, it should be noted that the amount of assumed meaning supplemented by context, situation, and our world knowledge is very much larger than we suppose. It was an illusion in the days of structural linguistics that the whole meaning of a sentence is carried by expressed words and sentence construction.

2. 'Come to a stop' construction

In support of our analysis of the *way*-construction, other similar double constructions will be discussed below.

The idiomatic expression 'come to a stop [halt]' is often used with a surface manner verb. The hidden base verb of motion is easily recovered by a phrase 'to a stop [halt]'. As this

expression has not been discussed much, some concrete examples will be presented below according to the semantic categories of verbs.

- (A) Manner of stopping
- (1) He saw a black-and-white swing off the street, into the station at high speed, *fishtailing to a stop* as the driver stood on the brake (Dean Koontz, *Winter Moon*).
 - (2) Tom threw on both brakes impatiently, and we *slid to an abrupt dusty stop* under Wilson's sign (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*).
- (B) Sounds produced while stopping
- (1) As the car *crunched to a halt* on the driveway gravel of the Trenton's house (Arthur Hailey, *Wheels*).
 - (2) The first fire truck *screamed to a halt* twenty feet away, and the crowd parted (John Grisham, *The Pelican Brief*).
- (C) The means to stop
- (1) Then my temperature gauge shot up; steam and smoke poured from the engine. I *braked to a halt* on the shoulder and turned off the ignition (*National Geographic*, September, 1997).
 - (2) Thirty minutes later the car *slammed to a stop* in front of a warehouse (Sidney Sheldon, *If Tomorrow Comes*).

The corresponding Japanese expression:

English:

Verb
Come

 to a stop.

Japanese: Verb-*te* tomaru
 (Surface Verb) (come to a stop)

The Japanese expression contains two verbs each of which corresponds to the surface verb and the base verb respectively. We will call the former 'the first verb' and the latter 'the second verb' for convenience. The first verb takes some or other connective forms such as 'verb-*te*', 'verb- *nagara*', making composite verb forms. For example, 'fishtail to a stop' translates into 'osiri-o hurinagara tomaru,' and 'crunch to a halt' into 'garigarit-to oto-o tatete tomaru.' To sum, English double construction is realized with two verbs in Japanese.

3. 'Rise to one's feet' construction

'Rise [get] to one's feet' is also an idiomatic construction meaning 'stand up.' The surface verbs modify the manner of rising. This construction has some variations such as 'a transitive surface verb + a person *to one's feet*, 'and 'a transitive verb + oneself *to one's feet*.' Examples: 'stagger to one's feet; pull her to her feet; push himself to his feet' (*The New Oxford American Dictionary*, 2005.) [NOAD] takes up only a part of the construction 'to one's feet' and gives 'to a standing position' as its meaning. However, as it has already become clear, the meaning 'to a standing position' is produced with the help of the hidden base verb.

In the corresponding Japanese expressions, English surface verbs are expressed with various forms of adverbials.

- (1) stagger to one's feet: *yoroyoro-to tatiagaru*.

- (2) pull one to one's feet: *hikiageru-yooni si-te tataseru*.
 (3) push oneself to one's feet: *yattokosa-to tatiagaru*.

As is seen in the above examples, the Japanese adverbials are varied and are not confined in verbal forms, 'yoroyoro-to' is an onomatopoeic adverb.

4. 'MOVE + Path-phrase' construction

As is already clear, the element of 'MOVE' is the production of the whole construction. [That is, the Path-phrase presupposes movement.] Talmy (2000:11- 49ff) discusses this construction in details. Only one typical example will suffice here:

- (1) The knife *clattered out of his hand onto the table* (Robert B. Parker, *Ceremony*).

The whole context of the sentence indicates that a man is near a table, and the knife he held in his hand moved onto the table even though the movement is not lexically expressed. Furthermore, we know that clattering sound is usually produced when a hard object like a knife falls onto a hard surface. With this knowledge in our mind, we naturally interpret that a semantic element 'fell' or 'slipped' to use ready-made verbs is hidden under 'clattered.' It is inconceivable that the knife jumped or flew or crept. This is how we infer 'MOVE' is hidden under a surface verb. It should be noted that 'MOVE' or other similar hidden element is of a prelinguistic cognitive quality except the cases where it is a part of a firmly fixed phrase.

NOAD (2001) describes this usage of 'clatter' as follows:

[no obj., with adverbial of direction] fall or move with such a sound: *the knife clattered to the floor*.

As is explained above, 'fall or move' in the description does not belong to 'clatter' itself but to the unexpressed base verb. But it is noteworthy that the Path-phrase is described in brackets. Unfortunately, this important condition for 'fall or move' is deleted from the second edition of NOAD (2005).

Talmy (2000:11- 27ff.) analyzes this construction, but there seems to be a slight difference between his and the present paper's analyses. Talmy recognizes two distinct lexical uses for the surface verb itself as in (1) (Talmy, 2000:11- 33 (16)):

- (1) a. The craft floated₁ / was afloat on a cushion of air.
 b. The craft floated₂ / *afloat into the hangar on a cushion of air.

However, in the view of the present paper, there is only one lexical item 'float' without any movement. The meaning as in (1b) is produced non-lexically by a Path-phrase 'into the hangar.'

In this construction again, the corresponding Japanese expressions to the English surface verb are manner adverbials including a verb-*te* form. Sentence (1) in section 4 has the following Japanese equivalent:

- (1') *naihu-ga katari-to te kara teeburu-no ue-ni*
 (knife-NOM) (a clatter-COM) (hand-ELA) (table-GEN surface-ALL)

suberi otita.
 (slipped down)

Note: NOM = nominative; COM = comitative; ELA = elative; GEN = genitive;
ALL = allative.

5. 'PUT + Particle' construction

In a sentence 'She *slipped* her coat on,' the hidden cognitive semantic element is inferred as 'put,' because we usually say 'She put her coat on.' In this construction the hidden element could be 'take' according to the context. The ambiguity is a natural consequence of cognitive inference. Here are some more examples:

- (1) She stood, and turned, angrily *shrugging* her coat back *on* (Robert B. Parker, *Double Deuce*).
- (2) At first light, he *strapped on* the holster and returned to the meadow ... (Dean Koontz, *Mr. Murder*).
- (3) The night and rain provide what little cover he needs to *wrestle* the raincoat *off* the cadaver while it lies hidden in the open trunk (Dean Koontz, id.) (*TAKE*).
- (4) Deegan looked around for an ashtray, saw one on the top of my file cabinet, stood, walked over, and *stuffed out* the cigarette (Robert B. Parker, *Playmate*).

Here again, NOAD (2001) treats the above use of 'stub' as a polysemous meaning parallel with other senses:

stub v. 2 extinguish (a lighted cigarette) by pressing the lighted end against something: *she stubbed out her cigarette in the overflowing ashtray*.

The meaning 'extinguish' comes from 'put' hidden under 'stub' and 'out.' The inference of the meaning is also helped by our common knowledge that we press the stub to extinguish the fire.

As in the case of the *way*-construction, the English surface verb is expressed by adverbials of manner or means.

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| (1) | slip | one's coat | on. |
| | surut- <i>to</i> | kooto- <i>o</i> | kiru |
| | (smoothly-COM) | (coat-OBJ) | (put on) |
| (2) | strap | the holster | on. |
| | kawahimo- <i>de</i> | horusutaa- <i>o</i> | tukeru |
| | (strap-INS) | (holster-OBJ) | (put on) |
| (3) | stub | out | the cigarette |
| | osituke- <i>te</i> | kesita | tabako- <i>o</i> |
| | (pressed-CON) | (put out) | (cigarette-OBJ) |

Note: COM = comitative; INS = instrumental; CON = connective.

6. Reporting verbs

When a reporting verb follows a direct speech as in

"I am hungry," he said.

the verb is usually one of utterance verbs such as 'say, tell, answer, ask' etc. On the other hand, there are many instances where non-utterance verbs are used :

- (a) special types of utterance: falter, gasp, giggle, groan, grumble, moan, murmur, etc.
- (b) facial expressions: beam, deadpan, scowl, smile, sneer, etc.
- (c) the reporter's interpretations of the direct speech: admit, advise, agree, assure, complain, explain, insist, maintain, marvel, object, offer, persist, promise, etc.
- (d) the position in the discourse: begin, continue, go on, interrupt, resume, etc.

When a non-utterance verb is used after a direct speech, the meaning of utterance is supplied by 'reporting verb construction,' that is: "direct speech + verb position + the speaker."

The corresponding Japanese expressions:

The English surface verb is rendered in the Japanese equivalent into a manner adverbial.

- (1) "Thanks," smiled she.
 "Arigatoo"-to nikkorisi-te kanozyo wa itta
 (Thanks-CONT) (smilingly-CON) (she) (TOP) (said)

Note: CONT = content.

- (2) "It hurts," moaned he.
 "Itait"-to umeku-yoo-Ti? kare wa itta.
 (It hurts-CONT) (moaningly-COM) (he) (TOP) (said)

Note: CONT = content.

Most of the verbs in groups (c) and (d) are rendered into a single verb expression with no supplement of an utterance verb. These verbs semantically presuppose utterance.

7. Fillmore's analysis of 'risk'

Fillmore (1992) provides a beautiful lexical analysis of 'risk' based on 1743 instances found in a corpus. In the situation where the verb 'risk' is used, he analyzes four basic semantic elements, (1) Protagonist, (2) his or her Deed, (3) the Goal of the deed, and (4) Harm that the deed might incur. Harm is the loss of a Valued Possession such as *life, health, money, fame*, etc.

Fillmore says 'All of the examples of *risk* were transitive. We found NP objects of the verb representing Deed, Harm, or Valued Possession, (p. 43) and he shows the following examples:

- (1) Most of us decided to risk *the venture*. <Deed>
- (2) You would risk *death* doing what she did. <Harm>
- (3) Now he was prepared to risk *his good name*. <Valued Possession>

The above means that 'risk' is used in a semantic frame which is composed of three kinds of elements. However, there is one more kind of object, that is, Place where one may encounter Harm.

- (4) I had considered risking *Alton, South Carolina*, without a gun (Robert B.Parker, *Paper Doll*).

Fillmore admits there are a few 'hold-outs,' sentences which do not fit into the risk frame (p. 43):

supplement than English. But in the case of the double construction, English is more dependent on context and situation than Japanese.

References

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