

On the English Ditransitive Construction*

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1. Introductory remarks

The English language has a peculiar syntactic form referred to as the ditransitive construction, in which the matrix verb is followed by two juxtaposed nominals. The construction is productive, but constrained to certain verbs. For example, the ditransitive is not grammatical in the following:

- (1) a. *John explained Bill the plan.
- b. *Chris obtained John a toy car.
- c. *Joe whispered Mary a story.

It is also well known that verbs which take two objects can be divided into three subclasses in terms of alternation, i.e., a *to*-alternation class, a *for*-alternation class, and a non-alternation class, as shown in (2)-(4):

- (2) a. John gave Mary a book.
- b. John gave a book to Mary.
- (3) a. Bill bought his son a toy car.

* Sapporo University made it possible for me to spend one-year sabbatical period at the University of California, San Diego, from 2001 to 2002, which proved to be a most stimulating visit. This paper is part of my research during this period.

- b. Bill bought a toy car for his son.
- (4) a. Mary envies Jane her good looks.
- b. *Mary envies her good looks to / for Jane.

In this paper, I will consider the semantic relationship between the ditransitive construction and its prepositional counterpart within the theoretical framework of Cognitive Grammar, and argue that the respective constructions should be characterized by virtue of the centrality of constitutive domains in terms of which a particular conceived situation is conceptualized.

2. Langacker's (1986, 1991, 1999) analysis

In this section, I will make an overview of Langacker's characterization of the two constructions in question. First, let me begin by observing the following sentences:

- (5) a. John sent a Christmas card to Mary.
- b. John sent Mary a Christmas card.

With regard to this semantic contrast, Langacker (1986: 51) argues that speakers have the conceptual freedom to construe a given situation in different ways and the two constructions in (5) differ in meaning because they embody subtly different images to construe the same conceived situation. The essentials of the respective structures are sketched in Figure 1, where the small circles represent *John*, *Mary*, and *a Christmas card*; the large circles stand for *John* and *Mary's* dominions respectively, and boldface indicates a certain degree of relative prominence. Both sentences have the

conception in which *a Christmas card* originates in the dominion under *John's* control and follows a path that results in its eventual location within the region under *Mary's* control. Crucial is that the semantic contrast resides in the relative salience. In (5a), the preposition *to* specifically designates the path followed by *a Christmas card*, thereby rendering this aspect of the conceptualization more prominent than other facets, as indicated in Figure 1(a). In (5b), on the other hand, the juxtaposition of the two nominals symbolizes a possessive relationship between them. Consequently, sentence (5b) lends added prominence to the resulting configuration, as sketched in Figure 1(b).

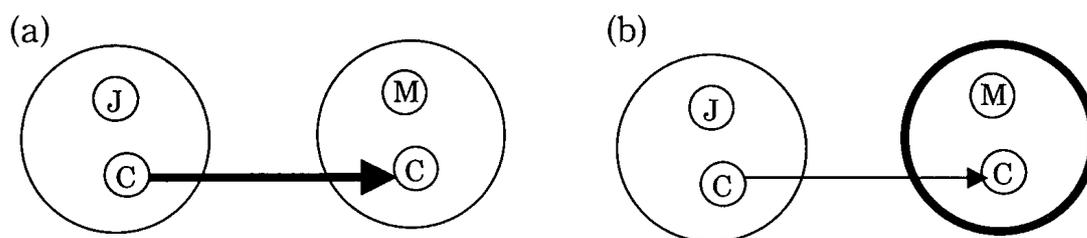


Figure 1 (Langacker 1986: 14)

With respect to the possessive relationship between two post-verbal nominals, Langacker has illustrated the validity with the following data:

- (6) a. I sent Harvey the walrus.
 b. *I sent Antarctica the walrus. (Langacker 1991: 360)

The difference in the felicity between (6a) and (6b) is whether or not the first post-verbal nominal can be construed as a recipient. In this respect, *Antarctica* in (6b), which denotes a location, does not meet this condition. He also states that in sentences like those in (7a-b), drawing a picture for someone provides him with access to something that was previously un-

available whereas washing windows does not entail a change of possession, which is responsible for the contrast between them:

- (7) a. I drew him a picture.
 b. *I washed him the windows. (ibid.)

Furthermore, focusing on the semantic relationship between the two juxtaposed post-verbal nominals, Langacker (1999) analyzes them as being linked by correspondence involving a reference point relationship which is defined as a manifestation of our fundamental ability to invoke the conception of one entity for purposes of establishing mental contact with another (i.e., the target). This means by definition that the first post-verbal nominal is more accessible than the second one to the conceptualizer (i.e., the speaker and hearer). This analysis can be supported by the following data:

- (8) a. ?*Who did John give a book?
 b. What did John give Mary?

In the case where the first post-verbal nominal is interrogated as exemplified in (8a), it can be said that no entity exists by which the conceptualizer can establish mental contact with the target. A *wh*-word is low in accessibility because it has no referent and therefore it cannot function as a reference point. Hence the unacceptability of sentence (8a) results. By contrast, the well-formedness of sentence (8b) is on a parallel with that of the following linguistic phenomenon:

- (9) Under the bed, what did you find? (Yasui ed. 1987: 712)

It is not in doubt that the sentence-initial element *under the bed* serves as a reference point and the rest of the sentence is used to inquire about an entity to be identified within the dominion evoked by the reference point. What I am suggesting is that a *wh*-word functions as a kind of a slot for a particular entity to be identified and it is less suspicious for a *wh*-word to be regarded as the target as a special case. Therefore, what is crucial to the acceptability of sentence (9) is the fact that the reference point chain is successfully maintained. It is this mechanism that gives a natural explication of the difference in felicity between (8a) and (8b).

Moreover, it has been generally recognized that in the ditransitive construction pronouns cannot occur in the second post-verbal position, as in (10a):

- (10) a. *John gave the boy it.
 b. John gave it to the boy.

This phenomenon can also be straightforwardly accounted for from the present perspective. In sentence (10a), the nominal *the boy* serves as a reference point and the pronoun *it* as its target. As is well known, however, pronouns occupy a higher position in the hierarchy scale of accessibility than nouns (see Gundel et al. 1993). This conflicts with the principle of a reference point entity being more accessible than its target to the conceptualizer. The unacceptability of the sentence results from this contradiction. In passing, this analysis can accommodate the functional perspective because the second post-verbal nominal (i.e., the target) is the focus in this construction.

We have seen that the ditransitive and its corresponding prepositional constructions have commonality in that both of them describe the same

conceived situation but differ in meaning because of their own conceptualization of the event. We have also found that the two juxtaposed entities in the ditransitive syntax are linked by a reference point relationship, which reveals their respective cognitive statuses. In the following sections, I will consider what motivates a linguistic manifestation of a conceived situation in either the ditransitive or prepositional construction.

3. Domains and their relative centrality

Following the basic tenets of Cognitive Grammar, every expression involves a set of cognitive domains as the basis for its meaning. Langacker (1991, 2000) has divided the notion of domain into two types: basic and non-basic domains. He argues that basic domains (i.e., time, space, and so forth) are thought of as realms within which conceptualization can occur and specific concepts can emerge, whereas non-basic domains are regarded as a set of concepts in terms of which a conceived entity is construed. Therefore, any kind of conceptualization counts as a non-basic domain capable of being exploited for semantic purposes (Langacker 2000: 2-15).

Langacker illustrates his points by stating that there are some domains that evidently figure in the conceptual characterization of the entity *glass*: (1) Space (as a basic domain), (2) Shape (this non-basic domain presupposes space), (3) Function 1 (i.e., container for liquid), (4) Function 2 (i.e., role in the process of drinking), (5) Material, (6) Size (easily held in one hand), and (7) Others (domains pertaining to cost, washing, storage, dropping and breaking, and so on). He also argues that non-basic domains overlap with one another, often to the extent of full inclusion, and that there exist varying degrees of centrality exhibited by the domains, which is one facet of linguistic meaning and important for the characterization of lexical items.

With this in mind, we may observe the difference between ditransitive and *to/for*-dative constructions in more detail.

- (11) a. I mailed the notice to Zelda.
b. I mailed Zelda the notice.

With regard to the alternation in (11), Langacker (1991: 326) argues that “it is simply a matter of co-existing constructions involving different selections of secondary figure (mover vs. recipient).” What should be noticed from his insightful remark is that the two constructions differ from each other in their communicative functions, i.e., sentence (11a) focuses on the relationship between the matrix subject and the thing whereas sentence (11b) focuses on an interpersonal relationship between the subject’s referent and the recipient. It follows from this that taken into consideration that the two sentences describe the same event in different ways, both sentences share the same conceptual structure, but different aspects are more central in the respective sentences. Thus, we can postulate that the conceptualization of an event encoded in either construction can be analyzed as containing the two possible central domains, i.e., the domain of the interpersonal relationship and that of the source-path-goal image schema, as shown in Figure 2, and that the relative centrality between them has much to do with its linguistic manifestation, which results from the cognitive process that when a particular domain is activated as more central and conceived of as

- a. interpersonal relationship
between a subject entity and a recipient
- b. source-path-goal image schema
along which a thing traverses

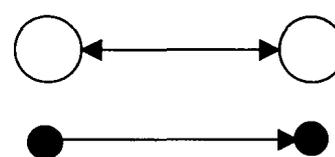


Figure 2

salient, the other domain recedes into the background.

My central point is that the ditransitive construction is a manifestation of the conceptualization in which the interpersonal relationship is construed as the more central domain, whereas the prepositional construction focuses on the source-path-goal image as the more central domain. In other words, the two constructions reflect the cognitive distance between a matrix subject and a recipient or between a matrix subject and a thing sent. Crucial at this point is that the two cognitive domains are not peculiar only to the constructions in question, but rather, they are immanent in the conceptualization of events in general, independently. Therefore, as far as the source-path-goal image schema is concerned, the directionality does not need to be fixed, which depends on the nature of the process a matrix verb designates. That is, the direction which the path denotes hinges on which of the two participants (i.e., the subject and the first post-verbal nominal) is construed to be its source, as illustrated in (12) and (13) (see Izutsu 2001):

(12) a. Joe paid Fred a dollar.

b. Myra brought Sam a flower.

(13) a. The architect charged us a fee of 2000 dollars.

b. The cops fined me \$ 500 for being drunk. (Izutsu 2001)

In sentences like those in (13), unlike sentences in (12), the first post-verbal nominal is construed as the source and the matrix subject as the goal. In the following sections, I will demonstrate the viability of this analysis.

4. The ditransitive construction with non-alternation

In this section, I characterize ditransitive constructions by observing

those which show non-alternation. Let me begin by observing examples like the following:

- (14) a. Bill envies John his good looks.
b. *Bill envies his good looks to / for John.
- (15) a. Jane envies Mary her fine garden.
b. *Jane envies her fine garden to / for Mary.
- (16) a. Cathy forgave Kevin his thoughtless remark.
b. *Cathy forgave his thoughtless remark to / for Kevin.

It can easily be noticed that the second post-verbal nominal in sentences (14)–(16) does not follow a path from the subject. Rather, the domain of the source-path-goal image recedes into the background to such an extent that it is thought to be just a mental path the matrix subject’s referent follows (see Miura 2000). Thus, it is difficult for the attenuated domain to be construed as being more central, resulting in the infelicity of the (b)-sentences. The ditransitive construction of this type can be characterized as a manifestation of the conceptualization sketched in Figure 3:

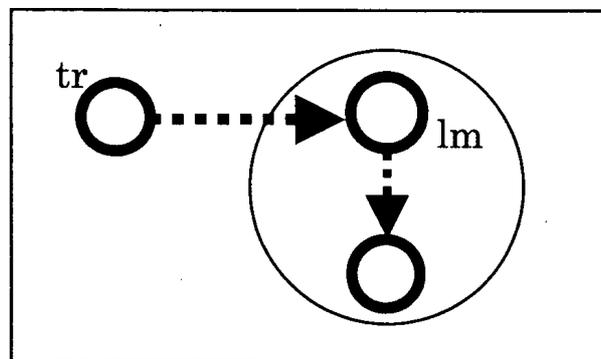


Figure 3

With regard to this type of sentence, to take sentence (14a) as an example,

it is closely related to the expression *Bill envies John*, which manifests a profile/active-zone discrepancy motivated by the salience of a whole relative to its part. That is, the second post-verbal nominal *his good looks* is thought to be an element which specifies the active-zone. This observation makes explicit the distinctiveness of this type of ditransitive construction and naturally leads to the conclusion that the domain of the interpersonal relationship is exclusively conceived of as being more central in the prototypical situation, resulting in non-alternation.

Keeping this in mind, observe the following sentences:

- (17) a. Mary gave John a kiss.
 b. *Mary gave a kiss to John.
- (18) a. Jane gave Bill some flak.
 b. *Jane gave some flak to Bill.
- (19) a. Mary gave John a lift in her XKE.
 b. *Mary gave a lift in her XKE to John.
- (20) a. Mary gave John a piece of her mind.
 b. *Mary gave a piece of her mind to John.
- (21) a. Mary lent John a hand.
 b. *Mary lent a hand to John.

As far as the sentences above are concerned, the second post-verbal entities are eventive nouns which designate a relation. Therefore, we can depict the semantic structure of this type of ditransitive construction, as in Figure 4. It is obvious from this that there exists a tighter conceptual integration between the main verb and the second post-verbal nominal, i.e., the former highlights the causative facet of some action and the latter specifies it. The function of the matrix verb is to manifest an event in the recipient's

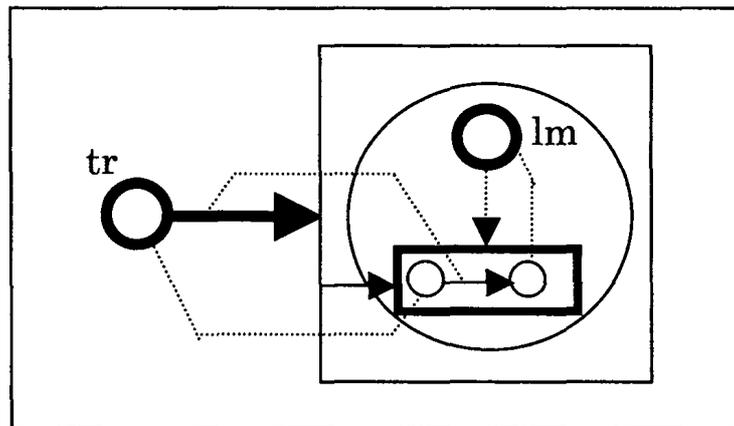


Figure 4

experiential dominion. For this reason, those events in (17)-(21) describe the acts between the two persons. What is important here is that observing sentence (22) reveals that the source-path-goal image schema, though attenuated, implicitly exists.

(22) ?John gave Mary a kiss and Bill gave one to Jane.

The two clauses in (22) are instantiations of the same event type and the second one is encoded in the *to*-dative construction with the notion of *a kiss* being objectivized and thereby coded by the indefinite pronoun *one*. This means that this event structure contains the source-path-goal image schema covertly as one of the constitutive domains. This meets the well-formedness of the ditransitive syntax, i.e., the existence of the two domains and higher centrality of the interpersonal relationship than the source-path-goal image schema.

Convincingly, our perspective can also be supported by the following data:

(23) a. Mary gave John an idea.

- b. Mary gave an idea to John.
- (24) a. Mary's behavior gave John an idea.
- b. *Mary's behavior gave an idea to John.
- (25) a. The medicine lent John relief.
- b. *The medicine lent relief to John.

In (23), the nominal *an idea* is an abstract entity and therefore its transference is interpreted as a metaphorical extension. In spite of this peculiarity, sentence (23b) is felicitous because the subject's referent is an entity of high volitionality and its intentionality naturally leads to evoking the notion of a path, which encourages us to construe the event in alternate ways, yielding the two constructions. In such a case, when the speaker chooses to construe the situation as the domain of the source-path-goal image being more central, it manifests itself in the *to*-dative construction. On the other hand, in the case where the subject designates an act by a given person as in (24), it is difficult for the domain of the path to be construed as more central. Instead, the interaction between the subject and recipient crucially inspires the latter with a certain idea or feeling. Thus, the speaker construes such an event in such a way that the domain of the interpersonal relationship is more central. In my view, the acceptability of sentence (25a) can be accounted for as a metaphorical extension from the event structure which underlies the sentence (24a).

From the observations thus far, we can characterize the nature of the ditransitive construction as Figure 5:

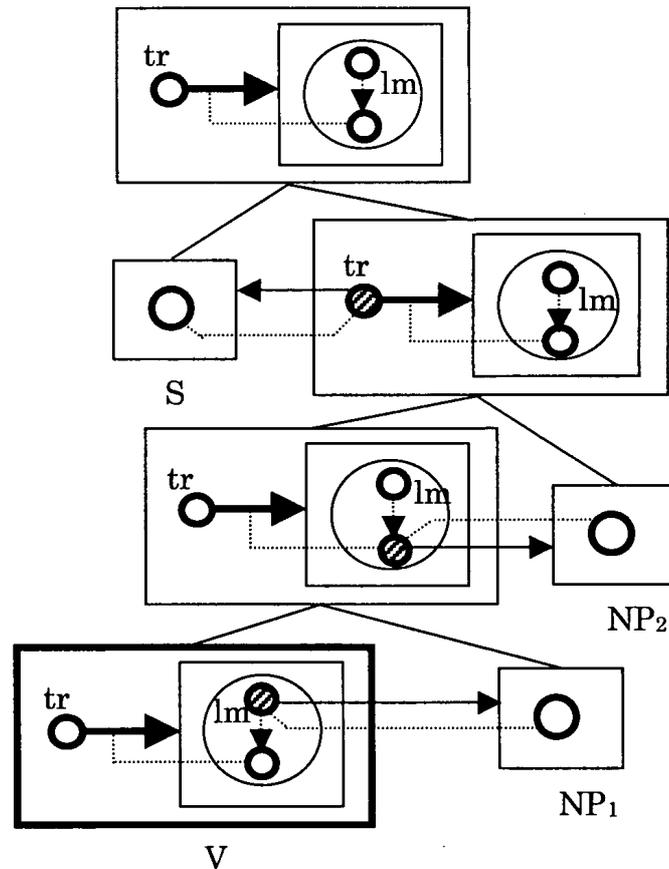


Figure 5: Composite Semantic Structure of $S + V + NP_1 + NP_2$

In Cognitive Grammar, every expression is thought to be an assembly of component structures which merge to form a coherent composite notion in such a way that a composite structure created at one level of organization can in turn function as one component of a higher-level structure. The constituency hierarchies thus merged reflect a basic psychological capacity for conceptual integration which is encouraged by a variety of factors (Langacker 1997,1999). Figure 5 describes the semantic structure of the ditransitive syntax, which indicates that the matrix subject exerts some force of energy physically, mentally, or abstractly on an entity in which the first post-verbal entity has possessive relationship with the second one. As noted, they are linked by a reference point relationship, i.e., the latter is assumed to be in the dominion of the former. Specifically, the distinctive-

ness of this construction lies in the cognitive statuses of the subject and recipient as the first and second figures in a profiled event, which renders the domain of the interpersonal relationship more central. The dotted line which connects the arrow designating the exertion of energy with the second post-verbal entity indicates the attenuated salience of the source-path-goal image schema. It follows that the three entities (i.e., the subject, the two post-verbal entities) are connected via the respective semantic relationships among them. And the relations thus emerged, except the interpersonal relationship, recede into the background.

The characterization of the ditransitive construction (as a synergistic effect of the relative salience of the two cognitive domains: foregrounding of the interpersonal relationship and backgrounding of the source-path-goal image schema) can accommodate the following contrast by resorting to the difference in salience between the two constitutive domains.

- (26) a. Frank was sold a car which turned out to be a lemon.
 b. Mary was sent the letter.
 c. The child was told a bedtime story.
 d. John was offered a post in the administration.
 e. Robin was promised an early departure. (Okuno 1989: 107)
- (27) a. ?*A book was given John.
 b. *A car was sold John.
 c. *A record was given Anne.
 d. *A telegram was sent Robert.
 e. ?The book was given Mary. (ibid.)

That is, in this construction, the domain of the interpersonal relationship is more central and therefore the first post-verbal nominal is conceived of as

prominent, which responsible for the acceptability of (26). By contrast, the domain of the source-path-goal recedes into the background and the energy force on the second object entity, which the verb evokes, is construed to be covert, thereby rendering the entity less salient. Hence the marginality of sentences (27) results, irrespectively of the semantic status of the passivized subject entity (i.e., indefinite/definite).

To make my point more explicit, observe the following sentences:

- (28) a. A car was given to John.
b. The book was sent to Mary.

To-dative constructions reflect the conceptualization of the source-path-goal image being in the foreground. This means that there exists an overt energetic interaction between the matrix subject and the theme, which is responsible for the acceptability of sentences in (28). As noted, the ditransitive and its corresponding *to*-dative constructions are essentially the same in regard to the conceptual content. The basic difference lies in the difference in salience between the recipient and the theme. Taken into consideration that “the *to*-phrase, as Langacker (1991: 359) argues, is a relational complement: it specifies the theme’s path, which the verb saliently evokes but characterizes only schematically,” the composite semantic structure of the *to*-dative construction can be depicted in Figure 6:

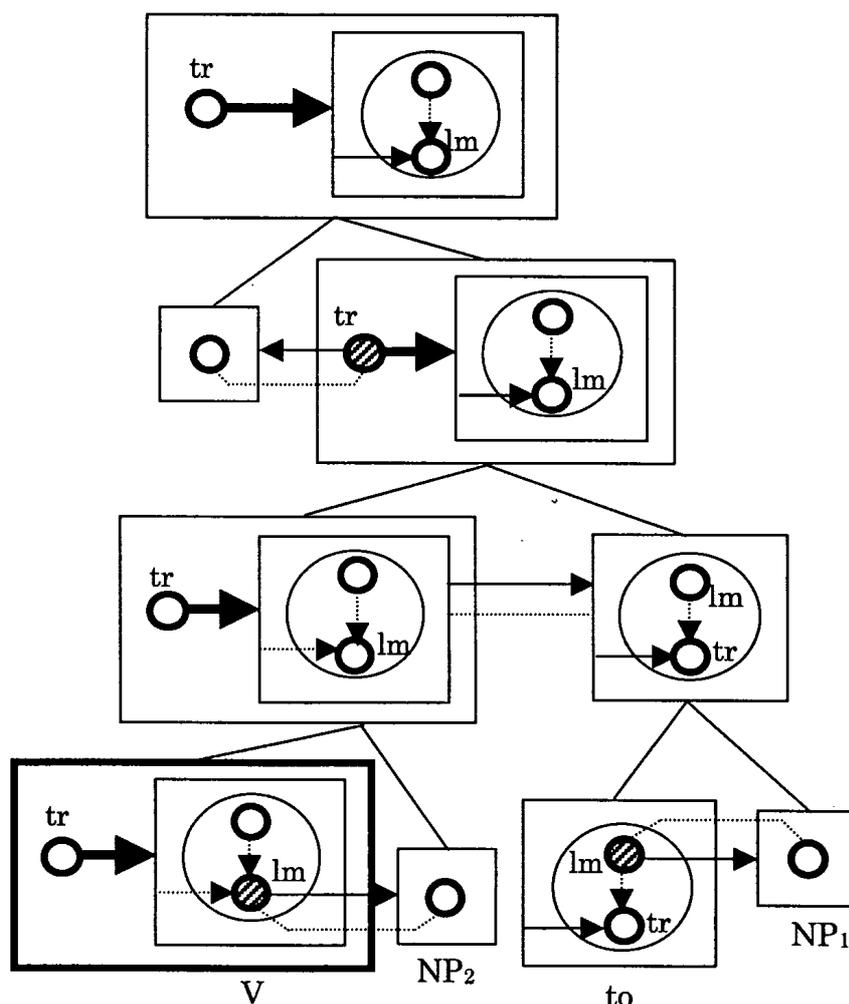


Figure 6: Composite Semantic Structure of the to-dative construction

The validity of the analysis in terms of the domain's centrality can be reinforced by observing sentences like those in (29) in some detail:

(29) John telegraphed / faxed / e-mailed / wired Bill the news.

Relevant here is a general tendency that verbalization of a noun retains its primary concept as a requisite subpart (e.g. fork (n) / fork (v)). For example, nouns such as *telegraph*, *fax*, *e-mail*, and *wire* are thought to be an instrument of communication, i.e., a tool for sending a message or information to someone. Therefore, as a natural consequence, verbalization of

such nouns contains as an intrinsic, prominent substructure the notion of transmission, as exemplified below:

- (30) a. telegraph (v): to send a message by telegraph
b. fax (v): to send someone a letter or message by fax machine
c. e-mail (v): to send a message by computer
d. wire (v): to send a TELEGRAM to someone

(Longman English Dictionary)

Thus, the domain of the source-path-goal image can be construed to be more central in the construal of the events these verbs designate. It is by virtue of this conceptualization that those verbs can be used in the *to*-dative construction, as in (31):

- (31) a. Bill faxed the reply to John.
b. Mary telegraphed the result to Jane.

What needs to be born in mind here to understand the ditransitivization of such verbs is that they also contain the concept of the interpersonal relationship between the subject and recipient as well as that of the source-path-goal image schema, which enables us to construe the same conceived situation differently. In the case where the former's domain is conceived of as being more central, the ditransitive construction should be motivated, as in (29). These examples suffice to verify my claim that the existence of the two non-basic domains and their relative centrality have to do with the manifestation of the construction, which results from the difference in construal of a given event, thereby rendering one of the two post-verbal entities more prominent than the other.

5. S + V + NP₁ + to NP₂ constructions

My objective here is to show that the restricted manifestation of an event coding to the S + V + NP₁ + to NP₂ construction is ascribable to the semantic nature of the event structure in which three entities (S, NP₁, and NP₂) within the scope of predication are construed in such a specific way that they are respectively coded in a subject, an object, and an oblique entity in accordance with the difference in salience among them. This asymmetry reflects the construal of an interaction between an agent (S) and a thing (NP₁) as being in focus on the one hand, and the conceptualization of a process that a verb (V) designates and the thing (NP₁) as being a conceptual group at the lower-level of organization on the other. In this case, a *to*-phrase is appended at the higher-level to specify a location, a goal, or a direction the main verb implicitly evokes. Therefore, the conceptual structure of an event of this kind is quite different from the semantic structure depicted in Figure 6, where a dative verb evokes a possessive relationship and the preposition *to* highlights a path which a mover follows.

My central point can be made explicit by observing the following sentences:

- (32) a. The scientist suggested an important plan to the President.
 b. *The scientist suggested the President an important plan.
 c. The scientist suggested an important plan.
- (33) a. John explained the problem to the children.
 b. *John explained the children the problem.
 c. John explained the problem.
- (34) a. Bill reported the accident to the captain.

b. *Bill reported the captain the accident.

c. Bill reported the accident. (Konishi: 1980)

In sentences like those in (32)–(34), the respective ditransitive versions are unacceptable. Interesting here is that verbs of communication such as *suggest*, *explain*, and *report* include the concept of an addressee as a requisite subpart of their conceptualization but it can be schematic and remain unprofiled as exemplified in the (c)-sentences. This means that in this type of event structure, the “conceptual content” which is *suggested*, *explained*, or *reported* is likely to be conceived of as more prominent than the addressee. In addition, the (b)-sentences explicitly indicate that these verbs do not take a relational complement which a dative verb does (as sketched in Figure 5 and 6). It follows that in this conceptualization, the verb and its content are conceived of as a conceptual group at the lower level of organization and the *to*-phrase is appended at the higher-level to specify the addressee, as illustrated in Figure 7:

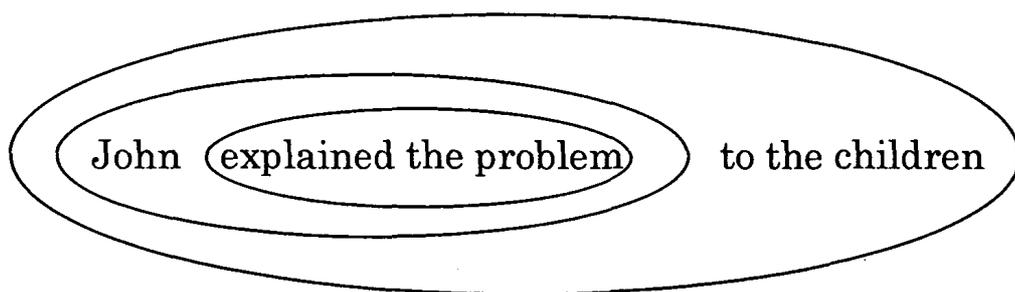


Figure 7

Thus, in this construal, the goal (or direction) is less salient, resulting in its manifestation as an oblique entity.

The anomaly of sentence (35a) can be accounted for in the same fashion:

- (35) a. *John said / shouted / screamed / murmured / whispered / yelled
Bill the news.
- b. John said / shouted / screamed / murmured / whispered / yelled the
news to Bill.
- c. John said his name again.

An important fact regarding *verbs of saying* is that they are used to express a particular thought in words, as opposed to a verb like *tell* whose meaning is defined as giving someone facts or information about something. This observation develops the idea that the act of saying itself (i.e., the process of pronouncing strings of words) is the “conceptual content” that is thereby built up, which strongly motivates the conceptualization of the two entities (i.e., *say*, etc. and *the news*) as a conceptual group. Interestingly enough, the event structure may contain a hearer who perceives the utterance and understands its meaning, as in (35b), but sentence (35c) indicates that the notion of such an entity is not crucial to this kind of event structure. Consequently, this conceptual process is the same as that depicted in Figure 7 and exclusively allows the event to occur in the S + V + NP₁ to NP₂ construction, but not in the ditransitive syntax.

Furthermore, observe the following sentences:

- (36) a. *Mary distributed the children apples.
- b. Mary distributed apples to the children.

The difference in the acceptability between sentences (36a) and (36b) can be predicted on the basis of the semantic value of the matrix verb. The import of the verb *distribute* primarily specifies a thing and a place where it is distributed. It may be argued from this that the nominal *the children*

is regarded as a location (or goal) rather than a recipient. Relevant data can be offered from this perspective, as in (37):

- (37) a. The police delivered the girl safely to her parents.
 b. The man transported the products to the store.

The respective event structures in (37) have a commonality in that the subject's referent situates a particular thing in a given location (or goal). These linguistic facts indicate that an expression with *to* receives a purely spatial construal.

From the observations above, the composite semantic structure of $S + V + NP_1$ to NP_2 can be sketched in Figure 8:

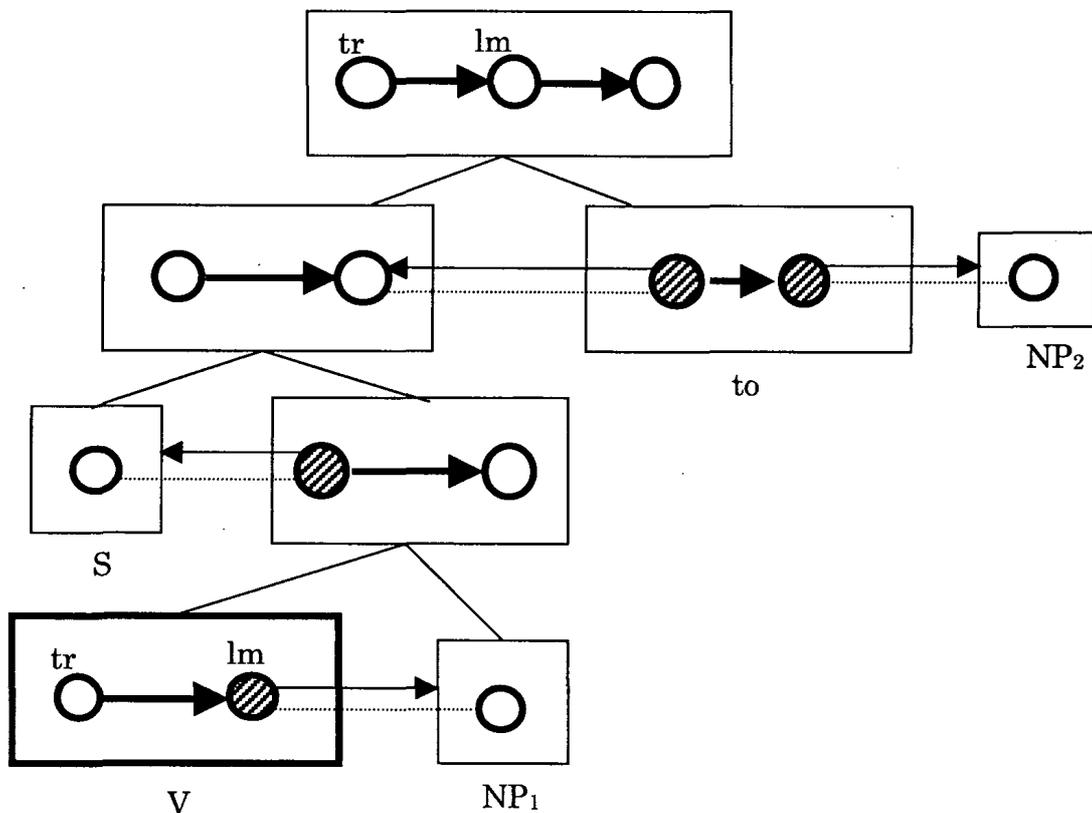


Figure 8: Composite Semantic Structure of $S + V + NP_1$ to NP_2

In Figure 8, the profile of NP₁ corresponds to one of the focal participants in the process denoted by a matrix verb (V) while the profile of a matrix subject (S) corresponds to the other focal participant at the lower level. At the higher-level of organization, the composite structure in turn combines with the atemporal relational predication designated by the preposition *to*, yielding the composite structure as a whole. Crucial here is that Figure 8 contains the conceptual overlap between the two component structures: the semantic correspondence between the landmark of the process profiled by the matrix verb and the trajector of the atemporal relation profiled by the preposition. This conceptualization results from the semantics of the verb which implies a directed action, concretely or abstractly. The function of the preposition *to* is to encode a path sub-component of such an event as a dependent vector. Therefore, the composite semantic structure is quite different from that diagrammed in Figure 6.

6. *For*-dative constructions

Turning our attention to the ditransitive construction which shows *for*-alternation, we find that it can easily be accommodated by the present perspective. To make my point explicit, I will begin by observing typical *for*-dative verbs:

(38) a. Verbs of creation:

bake, make, build, cook, knit, fix, etc.

b. Verbs of obtaining:

get, buy, find, order, grab, earn, etc.

c. Verbs of choosing;

choose, pick, select, etc.

(Pinker 1989: 113-114)

It is obvious that as far as these types of verbs are concerned, the existence of a *for*-phrase is not essential to the event structure profiled by the verbs. Therefore, the central domain of *for*-dative verbs is an asymmetrical energetic relationship between an agent and a patient, as sketched in Figure 9:



Figure 9

This centrality of constitutive domains leads naturally to a linguistic manifestation of a transitive sentence, as in (39):

- (39) a. Mary baked a cake.
b. John bought a new car.
c. Jane picked the dress she liked best.

With regard to *for*-dative verbs, the source-path-goal image schema is not conceptualized. Rather, the entity designated in the *for*-phrase is clause-external (or extrinsic) and the function of the *for*-phrase is to make explicit the intention of an act performed by a matrix subject. Therefore, the *for*-dative construction has the composite semantic structure in which the event structure profiled by the matrix verb elaborates the trajector of the atemporal relationship profiled by the preposition *for*. The full conceptualization can be diagrammed in Figure 10:

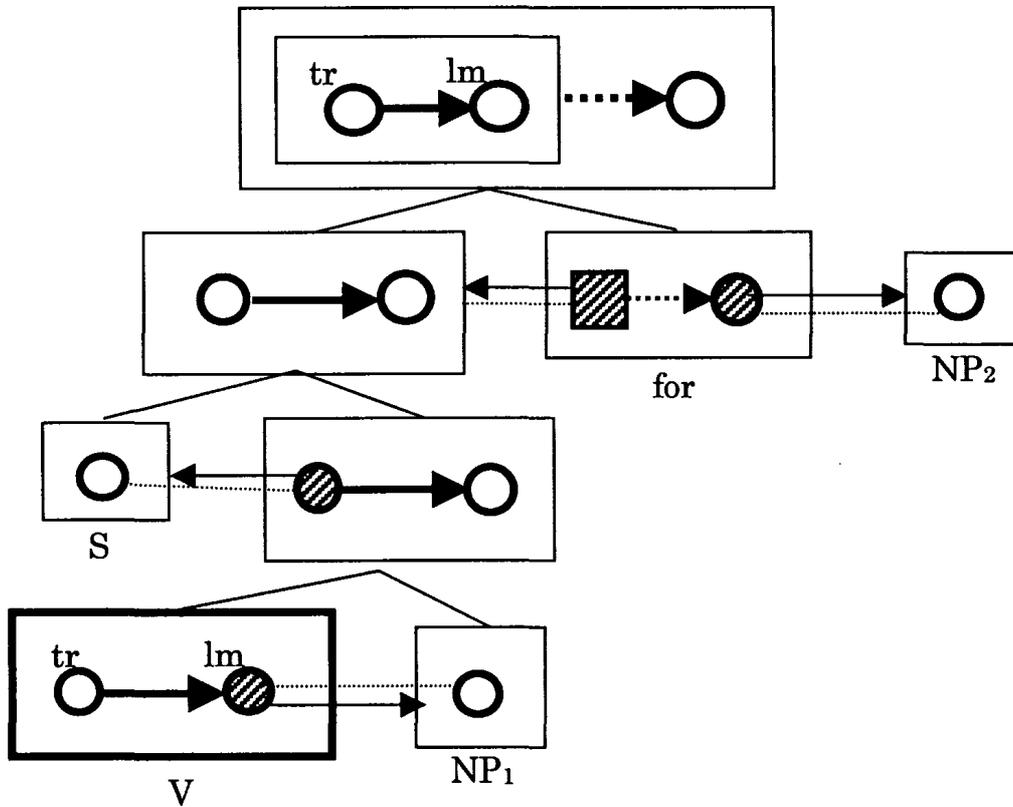


Figure 10: Composite Semantic Structure of S + V + NP₁ for NP₂

In Figure 10, the entity corresponding to the trajector of an atemporal relation profiled by the preposition *for* is the process profiled by the matrix verb. This means that the *for*-phrase is regarded as a modifier, but not a complement. We may offer an example as an instantiation of this semantic structure, as in (40a):

- (40) a. John opened the door for Mary.
- b. *John opened Mary the door.

Sentence (40a) does not entail a change of possession and thus *Mary* cannot be construed as a recipient, which is responsible for the unacceptability of sentence (40b).

Our central concern here is what motivates the ditransitivization of this type of event structure. The point, in my view, is that the agent's intentionality may evoke a kind of path in which a benefactive object of the preposition is construed to be a participant which is ultimately affected by the energy expended, which means that the semantic structure of the entire event implies the "indirect interpersonal relationship." What I am suggesting is that the highest level of organization (i.e., the full composite structure) can be regarded as containing two requisite domains for the ditransitive (i.e., the indirect interpersonal relationship and the source-path-goal image schema), which has to do with the acceptability of the following sentences:

- (41) a. Mary knitted John a cardigan.
b. Jane roasted Jim a chicken.
c. Tom found Bill a taxi.
d. Chris got Jim a jacket.

The manifestation of the ditransitive construction, as noted, reflects the synergistic effect of the relative salience of the two cognitive domains: foregrounding of the interpersonal relationship and backgrounding of the source-path-goal image schema. Sentences in (41) show that the construal of a given event as an instantiation of the semantic structure depicted in Figure 5, as a result of a semantic extension from that diagrammed in Figure 10, facilitates its ditransitivization.

It should be noted here that the ditransitive construction with *for*-alternation has peculiarity of its own, unlike its counterpart with *to*-alternation, which can be made explicit by observing the following sentences:

- (42) a. *Mary was bought a book by John.
 b. *John was baked a cake by Jane.
 c. *John was carved a statue.
 d. *Janice was got a new dress by Paul.
 e. *Mary was built a table by Bill.

The infelicity of sentences in (42) is ascribable to the “indirectness” of the interpersonal relationship between the subject’s referent and the recipient. This analysis can be reinforced by Bolinger’s (1977: 10) insightful remarks on passive sentences. He argues that the acceptability of a passive sentence has much to do with the notion of “affectedness” over the subject entity. That is, the subject entity in a passivized sentence must be conceived of as being affected by the process designated by the matrix verb, which supports my characterization of the ditransitive construction which shows *for*-alternation.

Furthermore, observing sentences in (43) and (44) can also support the present perspective. That is, the less centrality of the domain of the indirect interpersonal relationship renders the ditransitive syntax infelicitous.

- (43) a. *Chris obtained Jim a jacket.
 b. Chris obtained a jacket for Jim.
 (44) a. *Jane selected John a nice sweater.
 b. Jane selected a nice sweater for John.

The verb *obtain* contains as part of its meaning the notion of getting something through effort, skill or work, which renders the process of getting a thing more prominent. By the same token, the verb *select* implies

that the subject's referent chooses to do something by carefully thinking about which is the best. The unacceptability of sentences (43a) and (44a) results from the cognition that the respective processes profiled by the verbs are in focus and it is only possible that the entities *a jacket* and *a nice sweater* are construed to be a secondary figure (i.e., landmark). Therefore, those events are regarded as instantiations of the semantic structure sketched in Figure 10.

7. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have tried to make explicit the nature of the ditransitive construction on the basis of Langacker's characterization. The semantics of the ditransitive construction comes from the existence of three entities, their particular characteristics, and the interaction among them. This interaction is threefold: the physical or mental interaction between a matrix subject and a thing, the possessive relationship between a recipient and the thing, and the interpersonal relationship between the subject and the recipient. The present research has argued that two possible central domains are highly relevant to a linguistic manifestation either in the form of the ditransitive or of *to/for*-dative constructions, i.e., the domain of the interpersonal interaction and that of the source-path-goal image. At the same time, this distinction is reflected in the respective compositional paths the conceptualizer follows in building up the full conceptualization. And the path depends on how the conceptualizer construes a conceived situation; in other words, it is a matter of which domain s/he focuses on for expressive purposes.

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