Verb Sensitivity and Argument Realization in Three-Participant Constructions: A Crosslinguistic Perspective

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This talk examines attested patterns of morphosyntactic realization of the arguments of three-participant verbs such as English *give*, *send*, and *throw* and their translation equivalents across languages. I argue that these patterns can best be described by factoring the argument realization problem into two parts: an association of core verb meanings or 'roots' with event schema and an association of event schema with morphosyntactic realizations. After describing the way three-participants verb 'roots' can be associated with event schema, I consider attested possibilities for the realization of the arguments of an event schema. These possibilities depend on the morphosyntactic resources of languages, giving rise to a typology of argument realization for three-participant verbs.

My starting point is Rappaport Hovav & Levin's (2008) 'verb sensitive' approach to three-participant verbs. They recognize two major semantic classes: verbs of giving such as English *give* and *sell* and verbs of sending such as English *send* and *throw*. They further argue that the members of these two semantic classes have distinct associations with the event schema commonly posited for three-participants verbs: the *give*-type verbs are associated only with a 'caused possession' event schema, while the *send*-type verbs are associated with a 'caused motion' and, in many languages (Croft et al. 2001, Levin 2008), a 'caused possession' event schema. I briefly present English evidence in support of this proposal (Jackendoff 1990, Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2008), and note that this proposal extends to Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, and Russian (Francez 2006, Kishimoto 2001, Levin 2008, 2010, Miyagawa & Tsujioka 2004).

The actual realizations of the caused possession and caused motion event schema differ across languages, because languages dispose of different types of morphosyntactic resources for expressing these schema. Assuming that the same semantic verb class–event schema mappings are, in fact, found across languages, I ask what morphosyntactic realizations are attested for these two event schema across languages, and, thus, what argument realization options might be available for three-participant verbs. I show that attested possibilities include: (i) languages where the caused motion and caused possession event schema have the same morphosyntactic expression, (ii) languages where there are two realizations for the caused possession event schema, one of which is shared by the caused motion event schema, and (iii) languages where there are two realizations for the caused motion event schema, one of which is shared shared by the caused possession event schema. Since the two event schema are set apart in that the caused possession event schema involves a recipient and the caused motion event schema involves a goal, the attested types of languages can be characterized with respect to the realization of these participants: (i) some languages show the same realization for both goals and recipients, (ii) some languages allow two realizations of recipients, one of which is shared with goals, and (iii) some languages show two realizations of goals, one of which is shared by recipients. In addition, Hebrew shows a hybrid option, which treats pronominal and nonpronominal goals and recipients differently.

In conclusion, the 'verb sensitive' analysis allows for a factorization of the argument realization problem for three-participant verbs that illuminates the diverse morphosyntactic patterns attested for three-participant verbs across languages. In particular, it shows that when viewed at the appropriate level of abstraction there is in fact considerable similarity across languages, even if it is not immediately evident.

References

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