

LINKING SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS IN SIMPLE AND COMPLEX SENTENCES WITHIN THE OLD ENGLISH DOMAIN OF SPEECH

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE CONCEPT OF *LEXICAL TEMPLATE*

In order to reflect the interaction between the semantic and syntactic behaviour of predicates, the notion of *lexical template* has been devised as a way of including syntactic and semantic information within the same lexical representation, reflecting generalisations across lexical classes and reducing the information to be included in the lexical entries (cf. Cortés Rodríguez and Pérez Quintero 2001; Faber and Mairal Usón 2000; and Mairal Usón and Van Valin 2001).

Lexical templates are firstly composed of the logical structures developed by Van Valin and LaPolla (1997). Within the theoretical frame of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), four classes of verbal predicates are distinguished: states, activities, achievements and accomplishments (or active accomplishments), together with their causative counterparts. This classification of verbal predicates attending to their *Aktionsart* will allow for the capture of syntactic phenomena (combinatory possibilities of predicates) and morphological phenomena (transitivity and case assignment) characteristic of the different verbal classes.

In order to attain the argument structure of a verb, it is necessary to determine firstly its *Aktionsart*, from which its logical structure will be created and along with it its argument structure. Van Valin and LaPolla (1997, 139) propose two general semantic relations: the *Actor* macrorole comprises those arguments whose nature is closer to that of an Agent, and the *Undergoer* those arguments closer to a Patient.

The criteria that determine the interaction between arguments and macroroles are captured in the *Default Macrorole Assignment Principles* (152-153):

- a. *Number*: the number of macroroles a verb takes is less than or equal to the number of arguments in its logical structure,
 1. If a verb has two or more arguments in its LS, it will take two macroroles.
 2. If a verb has one argument in its LS, it will take one macrorole.
- b. *Nature*: for verbs which take one macrorole,
 1. If the verb has an activity predicate in its LS, the macrorole is actor.
 2. If the verb has no activity predicate in its LS, the macrorole is undergoer.

In RRG, transitivity becomes a semantic notion since the number of semantic macroroles a predicate takes determines it. Thus, those verbs that take two macroroles are transitive, those with one macrorole are intransitive, and those with no macrorole are atransitive. Moreover, *Case assignment rules* are also related to the assignment of macroroles (359):

- a. Assign nominative case to the highest-ranking macrorole (in terms of the Privileged syntactic argument selection hierarchy).
- b. Assign accusative case to the other macrorole argument.
- c. Assign dative case to non-macrorole arguments (default).

Logical structures lack the semantic information characteristic of the different lexical domains. Therefore, they have been complemented by a semantic decomposition in terms of ontological constants or internal variables and semantic primitives corresponding to the different lexical domains. This semantic decomposition will be provided by the paradigmatic axis of the Functional-Lexematic Model, based on the principles of Lexematics (cf. Coseriu 1978, 1981), according to which the criteria to integrate a given lexeme in a domain are based on its lexical decomposition, in such a way that the definition of the lexeme must contain a nuclear word, shared by the group of lexemes that integrate that domain, and a set of differentiating features which establish functional oppositions between the lexemes of the domain.

Accordingly, “lexical templates conflate both syntactic information (those aspects of the meaning of a word which are grammatically relevant) and semantic information (those aspects which act as distinctive parameters within a whole lexical class) into one unified representation” (Faber and Mairal Usón 2000, 7).

2. LINKING SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS WITHIN THE OLD ENGLISH DOMAIN OF SPEECH

Based on Van Valin and LaPolla (1997, 116-118), we present the following template for the Old English speech verbs:

do' (x , [**express.**(α).**to.**(β).**in.language.**(γ)' (x , y)]) & [**BECOME aware.of'** (y , z)],
where $y = \beta$, $z = \alpha$

This template contains the logical structure of an active accomplishment, where a speaker says something to a hearer and this one becomes aware of it. It shows three internal variables α , β , γ (marked by Greek letters) making reference to the content of the expression, to the addressee and to the language used, respectively, and three external variables x , y , z , where x will make reference to the speaker, z to α or the content of the expression, and y to β or the hearer.

The syntactic behaviour of a lexeme will be determined by the linking between internal and external variables. Internal variables differ from external variables because the latter correspond to external argument positions with a syntactic representation, whereas the former belong to the semantic representation of speech verbs, that is, they function as ontological constants of this verbal class adding a semantic decomposition to the logical structure and giving rise to the *lexical template* for the domain of speech.

As the example in (1) shows, applying the *Default Macrorole Assignment Principles* and the *Case assignment rules*, the variable *x* takes the macrorole *Actor* and Nominative case, the variable *z* takes the macrorole *Undergoer* and Accusative case, and the variable *y*, a non-macrorole direct core argument, is assigned Dative case:

(1) *Se mæssepreost sceal secgan sunnandagum and mæssedagum þæs godspelles angyt þam folce* (Ælet1 (Wulfsige Xa) B1.8.1)

‘The masspriest will say to people on Sundays and mass-days the meaning of the gospel.’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>se mæssepreost</i>
z	Acc	Undergoer	<i>þæs godspelles angyt</i>
y	Dat		<i>þam folce</i>

The external variable *z* can be also syntactically realised by complex structures being the result of combining the theory of juncture, dealing with the types of units involved in complex constructions (nuclear, core, clausal or sentential), and the theory of nexus, taking into account the type of relationship among the units in complex constructions (coordination, cosubordination or subordination). The difference between subordinate and non-subordinate junctures lies in the fact that only the former function as arguments of the main verb, since they may be clefted and occur as privileged syntactic arguments in a passive construction.

The complex structures which combine with the Old English speech verbs are core cosubordination, core coordination, clausal subordination, and sentential coordination. As the examples (2), (3), (4) and (5) show, taken from *The Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, core cosubordinations and core coordinations are realised by infinitive constructions, whereas clausal subordinations will be introduced by a subordinator, in this case *hu* (Present-day English *how*). Although Van Valin and LaPolla (1997, 469) question the fact that a direct speech construction depends on the

speech verb that introduces it, we will assume that the linkage between the two sentences is sentential juncture and the nexus coordination:

(2) core cosubordination

Deah hine deofol mid barspere beotige to ofsticianne (Byr M1(Baker/Lapidge) B20.20.1)

‘Though the devil threatens (him) to pierce him with a boar-spear.’

(3) core coordination

swa us þa halgan apostolas mynegodon to weorþianne urne hælend and his þa halgan
(HomS 30 (TristrApp 2) B3.2.30)

‘Such as the holy apostles warned us to honour our Christ and his saints.’

(4) clausal subordination

Ne mihte se dumba fæder cyþan his wife hu se engel his cilde naman gesette (ÆCHom I, 25 B1.1.27)

‘The silent father might not tell his wife how the angel set a name for his child.’

(5) sentential coordination

cwæð se halga Effrem to þam arwurðan biscope, Ic bidde þe, arwurða fæder, þæt þu me anes þinges tyðige (ÆLS (Basil) B1.3.4)

‘The holy Effrem said to the honourable bishop: “I ask you, honourable father, to give me anything.”’

Core cosubordinations and core coordinations are characterised by sharing an argument with the main verb or core. According to the *Theory of obligatory control*, included in Van Valin and LaPolla (1997, 544), core cosubordinations as in (2) combine with transitive verbs which have *Actor* control, whereas core coordinations as in (3) combine with jussive verbs which have *Undergoer* control. As a result, these authors state that only in the case of a core cosubordination a deontic modal operator will modify a sequence of cores which denote actions by the same participant:

(2) core cosubordination

Deah hine deofol mid barspere beotige to ofsticianne (Byr M1(Baker/Lapidge) B20.20.1)

Actor-controller: *deofol*

(3) core coordination

swa us þa halgan apostolas mynegodon to weorþianne urne hælend and his þa halgan
 (HomS 30 (TristrApp 2) B3.2.30)

Undergoer-controller: *us*

In relation to the semantic description of these constructions, we will apply the *Interclausal Relations Hierarchy*, appearing in Van Valin and LaPolla (1997, 481), according to which the different juncture-nexus types may be hierarchically arranged in terms of the tightness of the syntactic link or bond between them:

INTERCLAUSAL RELATIONS HIERARCHY		
<i>Strongest</i>		<i>Closest</i>
Nuclear Cosubordination		Causative
Nuclear Subordination		Aspectual
Nuclear Coordination		Psych-Action
Core Cosubordination		Purposive
Core Subordination		Jussive
Core Coordination		Direct Perception
Clausal Cosubordination		Propositional Attitude
Clausal Subordination		Cognition
Clausal Coordination		Indirect Discourse
		Conditional
		Simultaneous States of Affairs
		Sequential States of Affairs
		Unspecified Temporal Order
<i>Weakest</i> Syntactic Relations		<i>Loosest</i> Semantic Relations

Regarding the complex structures which combine with the Old English speech verbs, core cosubordinations will be linked to the semantic relationship *psych-action* (“a mental disposition regarding a possible action on the part of a participant in the state of affairs”), core coordinations to *jussive* (“the expression of a command, request or demand”), and clausal subordinations to *indirect discourse* (“an expression of reported speech”). The semantic relationship *direct discourse* will be included to account for the semantic description of sentential coordinations.

Therefore, as the following table shows, the syntactic description of complex structures will result from the combination of the theory of nexus and juncture, whereas their semantic description will be provided by applying the *Interclausal Relations Hierarchy*:

COMPLEX STRUCTURES		
Syntactic representation		Semantic representation
<i>Nexus</i>	<i>Juncture</i>	<i>Interclausal Relations Hierarchy</i>
	Core cosubordination	Psych-action
	Core coordination	Jussive
	Clausal subordination	Indirect discourse
	Sentential coordination	Direct discourse

Then, the next step will be the inclusion of the syntactic and semantic representation of complex structures in the lexical templates: their semantic description will provide information about the internal variable α , whereas their syntactic description will complement the external variable z .

Thus, from the lexical template that we present below and applying the linking rules the clausal subordination and the sentential coordination in (4) and (5) can be derived:

<p>do' (x, [express.(α).to.(β).in language.(γ)] (x, y)) & [BECOME aware.of' (y, z)], where y = β, z = α [Indirect discourse / Direct discourse]</p>

(4) *Ne mihte se dumba fæder cyþan his wife hu se engel his cilde naman gesette* (ÆCHom I, 25 B1.1.27)

‘The silent father might not tell his wife how the angel set a name for his child.’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>se dumba fæder</i>
z	[Clausal subordination]	Undergoer	<i>hu se engel his cilde naman gesette</i>
y	Dat		<i>his wife</i>

(5) *cwæð se halga Effrem to þam arwurðan biscope, Ic bidde þe, arwurða fæder, þæt þu me anes þinges tyðige* (ÆLS (Basil) B1.3.4)

‘The holy Effrem said to the honourable bishop: “I ask you, honourable father, to give me anything.”’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>se halga Effrem</i>
z	[Sentential coordination]		<i>Ic bidde þe, arwurða fæder, þæt þu me anes þinges tyðige</i>
y	tō + Dat		<i>to þam arwurðan biscope</i>

In (4) the variable *x* takes the macrorole *Actor* and Nominative case, the variable *z* takes the macrorole *Undergoer*, and the variable *y*, a non-macrorole direct core argument, is assigned Dative case. In (5), on the other hand, the variable *x* takes the macrorole *Actor* and Nominative case, the variable *z* cannot take the macrorole *Undergoer* since only subordinate junctures are considered arguments of the main core, and the variable *y*, introduced by the preposition *tō* (Present-day English *to*), will function as an oblique core argument.

However, there exist some alternations in relation to the macrorole and case assignment of the variable *y*, when combined with complex sentences, which cannot be explained by the linkage of syntax and semantics and which could be the result of the influence of pragmatic information, as the examples in (6) and (7), taken from Bosworth and Toller (1973) and Toller and Campbell (1972), show:

(6) *Ælc biscop ðone cyning myngige ðæt ealle Godes cyrcan sȳn wel behworfene* (B&T)

‘All the bishops warn the king to have all God’s churches well prepared.’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>ælc biscop</i>
z	[Clausal subordination]		<i>ðæt ealle Godes cyrcan sȳn wel behworfene</i>
y	Acc	Undergoer	<i>ðone cyning</i>

(7) *Hē ārās and þā gebrōðru gespræc: “Gebrōðru, miltsige eow God”* (T&C)

‘He stood up and said to the fellowmen: “Fellowmen, may God have mercy on you.”’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>hē</i>
z	[Sentential coordination]		<i>“Gebrōðru, miltsige eow God”</i>
y	Acc	Undergoer	<i>þā gebrōðru</i>

In these examples the macrorole *Undergoer* corresponds to the variable *y* in Accusative case and the variable *z* will be a non-macrorole direct core argument. We can postulate that the Accusative case associated with the macrorole *Undergoer* could signal the focal element in these sentences when either the clausal subordination or the sentential coordination is not the focus. Taking into account the fact that in Old English inflexions were used to establish the relation existing between the elements of a sentence, it would not be strange its use to mark the focal element.

Thus, the variable *y* in these sentences can be considered a marked focal element, as opposed to the clausal subordination and sentential coordination in (4) and (5), being located in the unmarked focus position, which appears to be like in Present-day English the final position in the core.

With respect to the examples (2) and (3) corresponding to a core cosubordination and a core coordination, they have been taken from the speech subdomain *To say that something bad may happen*, where the templates contain the semantic decomposition corresponding to this subdomain (**express.something.bad.may.happen**) and the logical structure of a causative accomplishment:

do' (x, [**express.something.bad.may.happen**.(α).**to**.(β).**in.language**.(γ)' (x, Ø)]) CAUSE
[BECOME **aware.of** ' (Ø, z)], where Ø = β, z = α [Psych-Action]

(2) *Deah hine deofol mid barspere beotige to ofsticianne* (Byr M1(Baker/Lapidge) B20.20.1)

‘Though the devil threatens (him) to pierce him with a boar-spear.’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>deofol</i>
z	[Core cosubordination]		<i>hine mid barspere to ofsticianne</i>

do' (x, [**express.something.bad.may.happen**.(α).**to**.(β).**in.language**.(γ)' (x, y)]) CAUSE
[BECOME **aware.of** ' (y, z)], where $y = \beta$, $z = \alpha$ [Jussive]

(3) *swa us þa halgan apostolas mynegodon to weorþianne urne hælend and his þa halgan* (HomS 30 (TristrApp 2) B3.2.30)

‘Such as the holy apostles warned us to honour our Christ and his saints.’

x	Nom	Actor	<i>þa halgan apostolas</i>
z	[Core coordination]		<i>to weorþianne urne hælend and his þa halgan</i>
y	Acc	Undergoer	<i>us</i>

In (2) the template only shows two external variables x and z . Applying the *Default Macrorole Assignment Principles* and the *Case assignment rules*, the variable x takes the macrorole *Actor* and Nominative case and the variable z will be a non-macrorole direct core argument, since only subordinate junctures can take a macrorole. Thus, the *Actor* will be the controller of the second core.

On the other hand, in (3) the template shows three external variables x , y , z , where x takes the macrorole *Actor* and Nominative case, the variable y takes the macrorole *Undergoer* and Accusative case, and the variable z will be syntactically realised by a core coordination. In this case, the variable y or *Undergoer* is the controller of the second core.

3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To summarise, we can say that the notion of *lexical template* has been developed as a way of representing the interaction between syntax and semantics. By linking the internal variables and external argument positions of a template the syntactic behaviour of a lexeme can be predicted, although this behaviour can be influenced by pragmatic information.

With respect to the Old English domain of speech, it has been showed how external variables can be syntactically realised by complex structures whose syntactic and semantic description must be also included in the templates complementing the external and internal variables respectively.

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