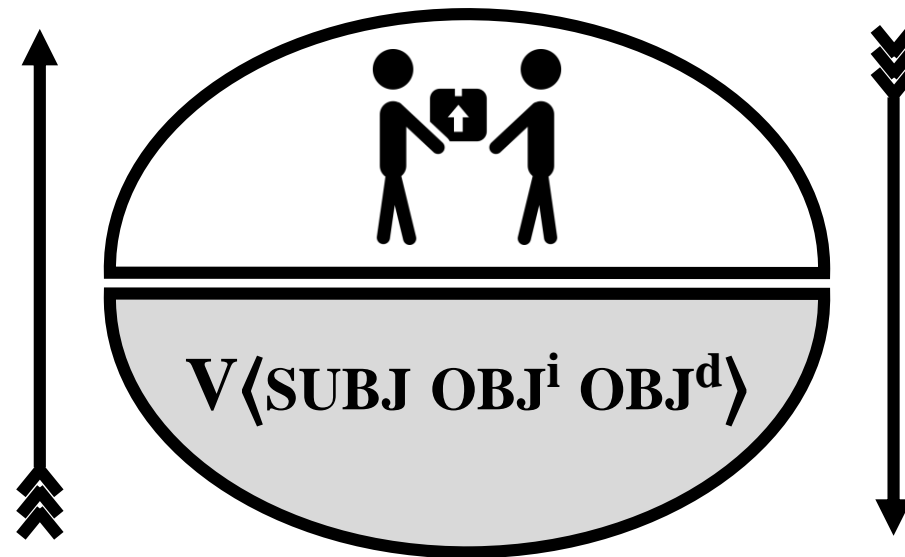


Arbitrariness and motivation in verb complementation



Introduction

- [1] i a. Most of the under-10 kids I get only know how to **kick** with their right foot. b. The school's cheerleaders **danced** in crimson and gold skirts [...].
- ii a. Benjamin muttered an apology while **kicking** a stone with his shoe. b. It's easy [...] to see someone's intentions when they're **dancing** salsa with you.
- iii b. He scrambled out of bed and **danced** into Darren's room.
- iv a. She fought to free herself, **kicking** at him [...].
- v b. Literally, three people **dancing** to Walk Like an Egyptian.
- vi a. He planned to **kick** the door open and rush in. b. My friend and I **danced** ourselves stupid and drank until three.
- vii a. A woman [...] **kicked** the gun away from the combatants. b. She grabbed Norah's hands and **danced** her around the room.
- viii a. I tried to **kick** my way into the cart. b. The Sisters watched Nikki as she **danced** her way to the end of the diving board.
- ix b. In utter happiness, we **danced** the night away.

Outline

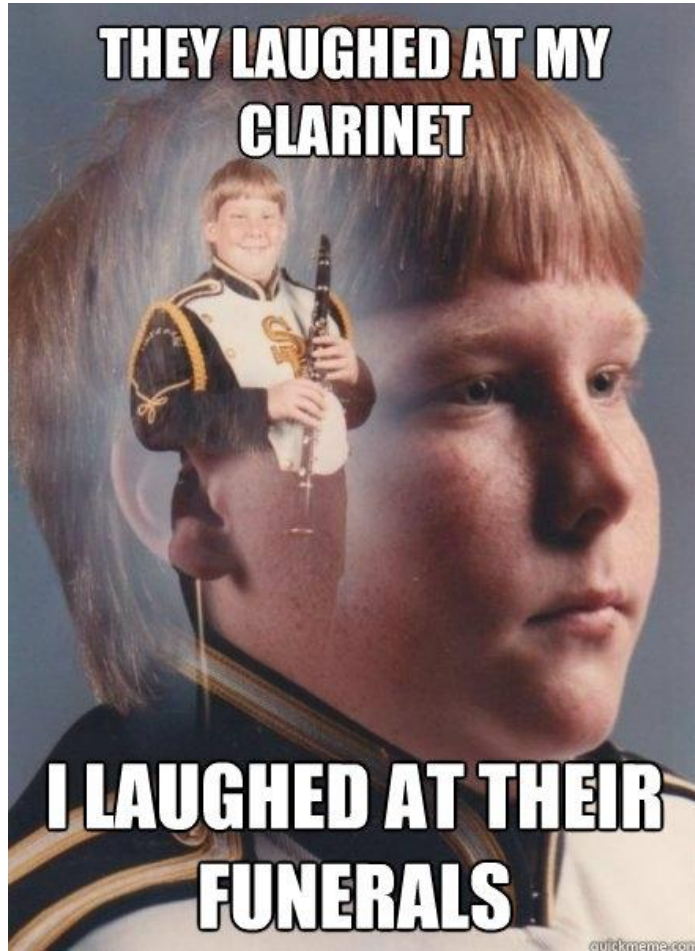
1. Preliminary notions: complements and patterns of complementation

2. Motivation in verb–complementation associations

3. Motivation in patterns of complementation

Conclusion and perspectives

Types of verb dependents



Same linear structure: < NP subject + verb + *at*-PP >

- Specificity to the verb
- Specificity of the preposition
- Linear position
- Passivization
- Argumenthood

Two main kinds of dependents: **complements** and **adjuncts**

Criteria for complementhood

		COMPLEMENT	ADJUNCT
Specificity	<i>Is the constituent licensed by the verb? Is its form determined by the verb?</i>	YES	NO
Obligatoriness & Latency	<i>Is the constituent obligatory? If not, does it have a definite interpretation when it is missing?</i>	YES	
Linear position	<i>Is the position of the constituent constrained by non-semantic, non-informational criteria?</i>	YES	NO
Verb anaphors	<i>Can the constituent appear next to an anaphoric verbal construction?</i>		YES
Argumenthood	<i>Is the constituent an obligatory participant in the situation denoted by the verb?</i>	YES	
	<i>Is the constituent a circumstance of the situation denoted by the verb?</i>		YES

Semantic contribution of complementation

She handed him a letter. ⟨SUBJ OBJⁱ OBJ^d⟩

She wrote him a poem.

She took the kettle off the stove. ⟨SUBJ OBJ GOAL⟩

She sneezed the napkin off the table.

Where does the meaning come from?

vs

Two clear semantic contributions

diathesis (Mel'čuk 2015: 52)

mini-construction (Boas 2003)

lexically-bound argument structure construction
(Stefanowitsch 2011: 383)

default syntactic configuration
(Delhem 2018: 259)

Syntactic pattern as a distinct unit:

argument structure construction
(Goldberg 1995)

pattern of complementation
(Delhem 2018)

Verbs and their complementation

Levin (1993) : the syntactic patterns of verbs can be predicted from their meaning

- Non-arbitrariness of syntax

New verbs should be assigned patterns according to their semantic category

Analysis of the complementation of 52 neologisms coined from 2000 onward

Mostly transitive and intransitive, with a few marginal patterns (*V about+N*, *V with+N*, *V that+C*)

- How their complementation is assigned depends on the origin of the word

Verbs formed from other verbs

AFFIXATION

unfollow *overvote*

BLENDING

precycle *mansplain*

COMPOUNDING

greenwash *photobomb* *genderswap* *pwn*

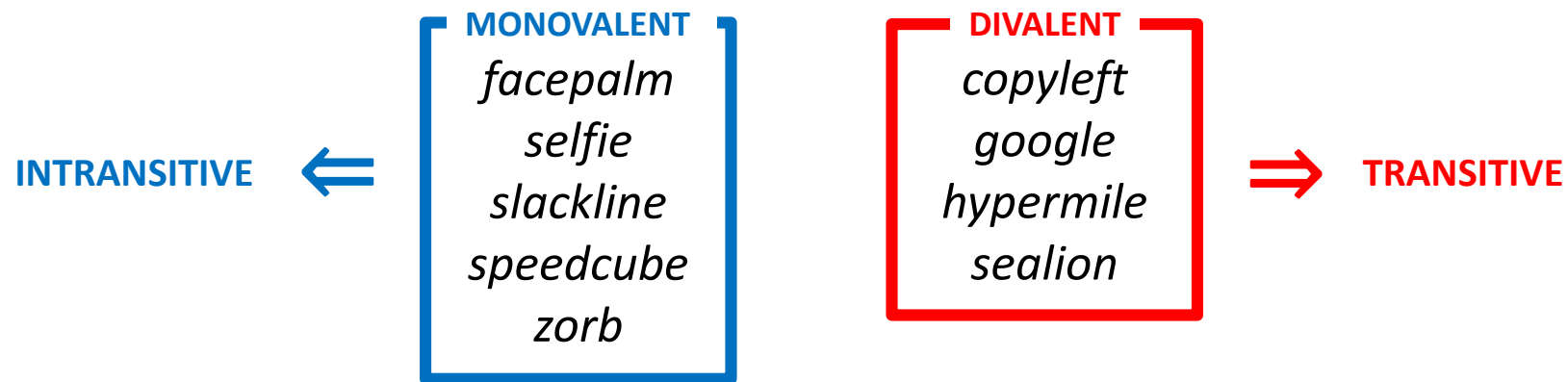
Predictable complementation: *babymoon, crowdfund, cyberslack, frape, glamp, likebait, microblog, nowcast, phub, protire, shopgrift, sofalize*

Fewer possibilities: *bingewatch, geobrag, miswant, overvote, sext*

- [3] i Cook has admitted to KGW that he **sexted** with Terri, but denied having sex with her.
- ii Over the summer, [...] Candace Cabrera **subtweeted** that Christina was a “has been” who hasn’t had a hit [“Dip It Low”] in a decade and that she was being played by the rapper.

Verbs formed from nouns

copyleft, facepalm, google, hypermile, sealion, selfie, slackline, speedcube, zorb



- [4] i I just **facepalmed** so hard I nearly broke my nose.
- ii I've had my share of people coming from a different political perspective [perhaps yours] who would undoubtedly complain if I “**sealioned**” them.

Verbs formed from nouns



[5] I crossed a hanging bridge, slid down from 4 different slides, **zorbed** down multiple times.

[6] i Why These Guys **Slacklined** Across the Mexico-U.S. Border

ii A Team of Mexicans and Americans **Slacklined** the Border to Protest Trump's Wall

The caused-motion pattern

[7] She'd **laugh** me off the couch if I said that to her, but she has a sense of self and does nothing gratuitously.

Stefanowitsch (2011) vs Kay (2013) about the status of the caused-motion pattern

- [8]
- i Finally, Michael **rolled** the ball toward her.
 - ii The ball **rolled**.
 - iii Michael **rolled** the ball.
 - iv The ball **rolled** toward her.

'⟨SUBJ OBJ GOAL⟩' = '⟨SUBJ OBJ⟩' \oplus '⟨SUBJ GOAL⟩' : highly motivated, even predictable

The *with* pattern

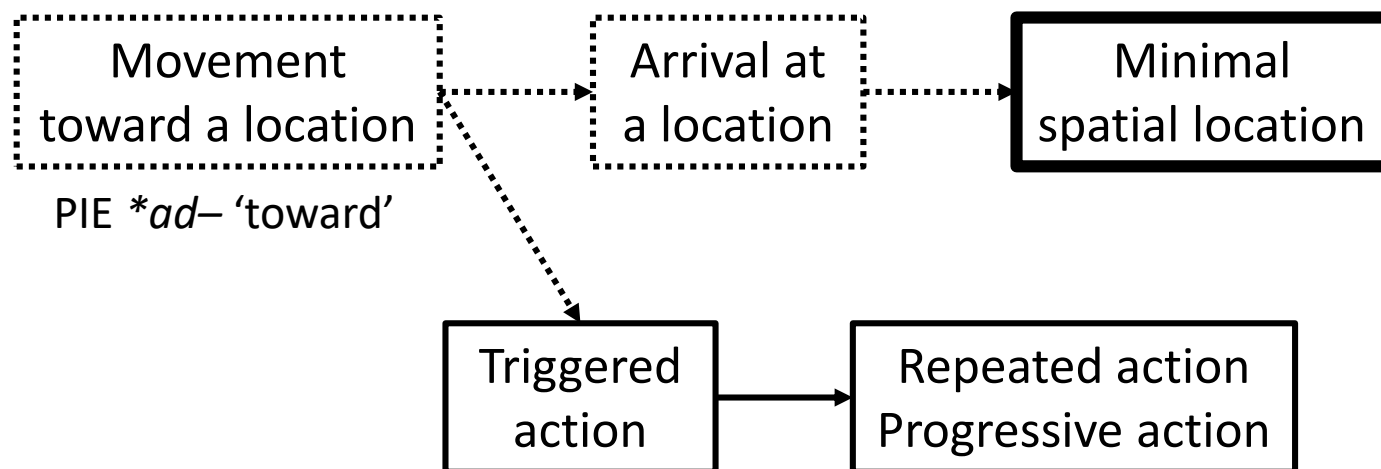
Langacker (2008: 389): “*with* profiles a reference-point relationship such that the landmark is found in the trajector’s dominion”

- [9]
- i But, first, could I say, I **agree** with Congressman Levin that we need vigorous enforcement.
 - ii The development of worldwide communication networks **started** with the telegraph, telephone, and wireless and, in the twentieth century, **continued** with the radio, television, and computer.
 - iii And if you’re **dripping** with sweat, use your towel—not the drinking fountain—to clean yourself off.
 - iv [The field] **buzzed** with mosquitoes, and smelled of the overflowing septic tank.

- Semantic interaction between verb and pattern of complementation not predictable
- Another form could have been used (*listen to, full of*)
- The use of *with* makes sense : the speaker conceptualizes two entities within the same space

The *at* pattern

- [10]
- i “Oh... So you talked with him?” “It was more like I **talked** at him.”
 - ii Eric kept **grabbing** at the bat, but she wouldn't let him have it.
 - iii She had to bend under the branches of a thorny bush which **tore** at her dressing gown, leaving most of its lower half in tatters.
 - iv Their father swung at the man, chased him into his car, then **kicked** at the locked door.

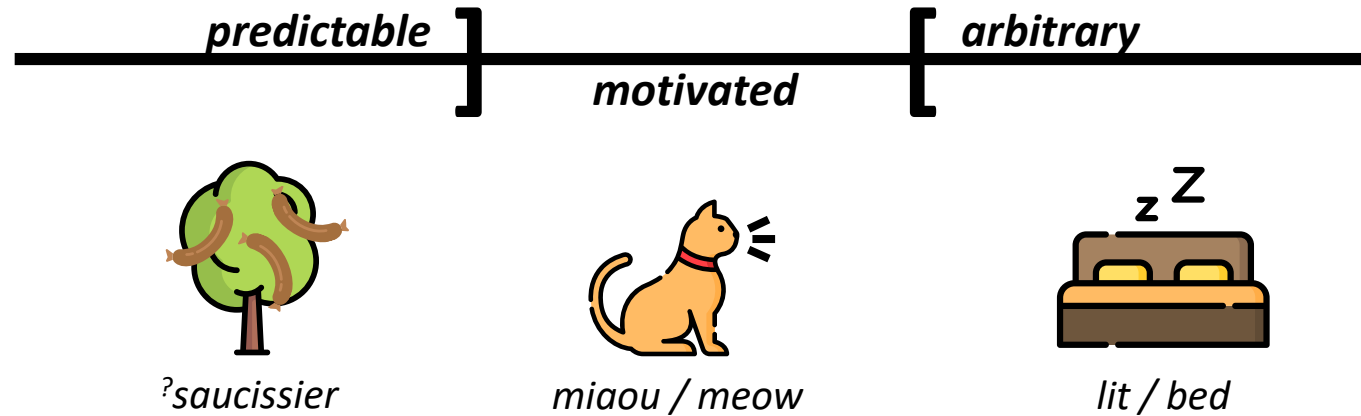


Dead polysemy = Homonymy
(Blank 2003)

Synchronically unmotivated pattern

Conclusion

- As form–meaning pairings, patterns of complementation behave like other linguistic units



- Neologisms are assigned syntactic patterns in a non-arbitrary way
- Perspectives: Assessing motivation in verb–complementation associations
 - Can the meaning of a verb be predicted from the patterns it can be associated with?
 - Are the transitive (89,7%) and intransitive (59,4%) patterns motivated?

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