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11 Verbal Semantics in Relation to Pragmatic Meanings of SA Constructions

Constructions that express the external causation of self-agentive motion and that (a) do not express coercive manipulation and (b) do not have an evaluative status, employ verbs denoting the basic, most neutral types of locomotion, devoid of additional, modifying features (be it purely physical features or features referring to the inner self of the mover). With human causees, the set of verbs used in this type of construction thus includes the verbs *walk* (but not, e.g., *tread, pad* or *stride*), *swim* (but not *crawl* – used in the sense "swim with a crawl stroke"), *march* (used in the sense to walk "in a military manner, with a regular and measured tread", cf. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* 1993: 1695), *run* (but not, e.g., *gallop* or *sprint*) and *dance* and *waltz* (but not *polka* or *boogie*).

The fact that *waltz* denotes a very specific type of movement (a version of dancing) and still may appear in SA constructions, might seem to invalidate the argumentation based on the generality of the types of movements. As will be shown later, *waltz* in SA constructions may be used to designate the more general "dancing", i.e. it may lose its reference to certain concrete physical features of "waltzing". The verb *fly,* in spite of designating a basic type of movement in its class, can, naturally, be used in a very limited set of scenarios expressed by means of a SA construction: birds that are flown are not only simply released to fly, but their flight is, in some way or other, under the control of the causer and has a definite purpose. The prototypical scenarios thus include hawks and pigeons, which are flown especially for hunting or racing. Verbs that denote specific types of self-agentive movements carried out by horses, namely, *trot, jog, canter, pace, jump, amble, prance* and *gallop* cannot be taken as exceptions to the basic status of the semantics of the verbs employed in SA constructions. The reason for this is that, when used to encode animal movement, these verbs can only describe purely physical properties, i.e. properties that are not outwardly observable manifestations of the animal's inner self.

The reason why only a very restricted repertory of verbs appear in SA constructions should be sought not only in a very strong tendency to reserve these constructions for the expression of more or less prototypical motion situations (one might say "the most normal" motion situations) involving the most basic and frequent kinetic patterns, but also in the fact that the meaning of these types of construction are complex in the

sense that they do not merely encode the simple causative pattern 'to cause an animate causee to move'. In actual fact, this latter reason, i.e. the complexity of the construction's meaning, is closely related to the former reason, i.e. to the restricted repertory of verbs. Further explanation will again be in order at this point.

As has already been pointed out, the pattern 'cause an animate causee to move' forms a basic, skeletal frame, to which a variety of additional aspects of meaning are added. The addition (or, rather, the superimposition) of these supplementary aspects of meaning is the result of a specific composite structure of these induced motion events.

It can be recalled, very briefly, that the causative structure of these motion situations does not rest in the mere merging of the causing event and the caused event: the causing event, whose nature is not strictly kinetic (put more precisely, the causer does not have to execute the motion lexicalized in the verb), is superimposed on the caused, strictly kinetic event. In other words, what we have here is not a simple overlapping of the causing event and the caused event, but an inclusion of the caused event in the more general causing event (the word *general* refers to the character of the activity carried out by the causer), whose scope of operation is broader than that of the caused event: the causing event includes the causer's execution of prior intention, which is related to the purpose of the action and, in this way, it goes beyond the caused event.

A closer look reveals that it is the basic status of the types of motion expressed in these types of construction that makes it possible for such constructions to carry additional, pragmatic meanings – note that the verbs *walk, run, dance* and *swim* used to represent externally caused self-motion in humans function as "upper terms" (as troponyms, in Fellbaum's 1990 terminology). In other words, the generality of verbal semantics is the factor that enables us to utilize the constructions for the expression of meanings that are not a mere result of the interaction between grammatical and lexical features of sentences. Thus *John walked the dog* may not only mean "to induce the dog to walk and act as a co-mover" (*He walked the dog to the house*), but it may, depending on the context, convey the meaning "to induce the dog to walk (and act as a co-mover) in order to keep it healthy" (*He walked the dog round the park, He walked the dog every day*). A variety of pragmatic interpretations may also be valid e. g. for swimming the horse (*He swims the horses every day, He swam the horse across the river*) or walking the horse (*He walked the horse round the yard, He walked the horse to the stable, He walked the horse every day*). In the classic accompaniment scenario (*He walked her to the door/to the station,* etc.) the causer does not merely

act as a co-mover, but does so in order to help the causee, to lead him on the way, to show his positive attitude towards him, etc. (accompaniment scenarios will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 11.1). Similarly, *to walk the patient around the ward,* i.e. the scenario with the same verb and a human causee, encodes the type of the causer's involvement in the caused motion (the causer helps the person, leads him on the way, etc.) and the purpose of the action that goes beyond the kinetic event *per se* (the purpose might be, for example, "to promote the patient's recovery").

This is not to say, however, that the situation expressed in "walking a person somewhere" always involves a helping scenario – one may walk somebody out of the pub, for example. This situation invites the interpretation "the causee is induced to leave the place although it is probably not his wish to leave the place" (this is not to say, however, that the causee displays some sort of resistance – let me recall that in SA constructions the causee identifies himself with the prior intention imposed on him by the causer).

To further illustrate the fact that it is the generality of the verb that makes it possible to endow SA constructions with a variety of pragmatic meanings, let me adduce an example with the verb *walk.* The sentence *Helen was walked to the Oriental Hotel* may mean that (a) Helen was induced to walk to the hotel and the causer acted as a co-mover or that (b) Helen was accompanied there.

The sentence may, however, also encode a motion situation which can be reworded as, roughly, "Helen was moved to the Oriental Hotel because of overbooking" (the phrase *to walk a person to a hotel* means "to send a person to another hotel because of overbooking"). That is, the syntactic pattern 'NP-VP-NP(-PP)' employing a verb that encodes one of the basic types of self-agentive movements is not enough to guarantee the proper decoding of the meaning intended by the speaker. The variety of additional pragmatic meanings, imposed on the basic causative frame, requires that the respective sentences be set in a broader situational frame.

Thus far, this sub-section has dealt with two aspects of SA constructions:

(a) the semantico-pragmatic complexity of their meaning (to repeat, the skeletal causative frame functions as a carrier of a variety of meanings, whose interpretation is largely dependent on the linguistic and situational context)

(b) the basic status of the meanings of the verbs that appear in these constructions: the verbs lexicalize the most basic and the most neutral types of self-agentive locomotion (the word *neutral* is used here in the sense "not burdened with additional aspects of meaning, whether per-

taining to the purely physical aspects of the movement or to aspects that express the inner self of the mover").

A closer look at caused motion constructions shows that these two aspects (i.e. the marked dependence of the construction's meaning on the broader situational frame and the basic status of the movements represented in them) may enable the verbs to undergo the process of semantic bleaching. In concrete terms, the verbs may designate movements that are deprived of some of their concrete physical features, otherwise present in their basic meaning. As a result, the verbs gain in the generality of their reference.

The sentence *Helen was walked to the Oriental Hotel* may, again, serve as a good illustration. Here, the verb *walk* has a more general meaning than "to move in such a way that one foot is always on the ground". One might speculate that the verb *walk* is used to represent the movement in question probably because it is best suited (at least within the class of self-agentive locomotion verbs) to grasp a situation in which the causee is not explicitly forced to move. The use of the verbs *march* and *run* would result in a coercive interpretation, certainly not quite appropriate to grasp the social relationship between 'the hotel manager (the causer) – his client (the causee)' in a situation in which the necessity to transfer the causee is brought about by the causer.

Let me, at this point, adduce an example demonstrating that the increase in the generality of the verb's meaning need not be accompanied by the loss of the verb's link to its basic meaning:

(11.1) If you arrive late and are "walked" to another hotel, request that the offending hotel pay your first night stay. (http://www2.creighton.edu/fileadmin/user/AdminFinance/Purchasing/docs/Traveler_Handbook.pdf)

This example indicates (note the use of inverted commas) that the verb's basic meaning forms a background against which the more general meaning is established.

An increase in the generality of verbal meaning is especially apparent in situations in which the ultimate aim imposed by the causer upon the caused motion clearly transcends the strictly kinetic domain. In "walking the dog (to keep it fit)" it does not always have to be the case that the dog actually walks (the dog may run, e.g.). Even the accompaniment scenario, as in "walking somebody to the door", does not necessarily have to involve the causee's walking – the causee may move in a wheelchair and still may be "walked" to the door.

On the whole, it appears that the process of the bleaching of the verb's semantics is a concomitant (and, in fact, a logical) feature of the increase in the idiomaticity of a given construction. The decrease in the concreteness of the verb's meaning is accompanied by the increase in the idiomaticity of the construction. The phrase *to swim a person* may serve as an illustrative example: if the phrase is used in the sense to "test (a person) suspected of witchcraft by immersion in water to establish his or her ability to float" (*The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* 1993: 3176), the verb *swim* does not encode its basic meaning, cf.:

(11.2) /…/ or the next day, or the day after that, the stupid peasants would come and take away your grannie to the witch-finder, prick her for witch-marks, watch her till she maddened from sleeplessness, then swim her in the river. (BNC)

Thus far, no mention has been made of the verb *run*. Since this verb forms a natural antonymous pair with the verb *walk* – Fellbaum regards *walk* and *run* as "direct antonyms" (1990:288–9) – and since the generalized *walk* represents walking as the most basic (the most frequent because the most normal) self-agentive type of locomotion deprived of an explicit reference to the fact that one foot is always on the ground, one might predict, quite rightly, that the generalized *run* also lacks reference to the specific position of feet in the motion and that it, therefore, differs from the generalized *walk* in profiling the speed of motion (and, also, greater effort exerted on the part of the mover). That is, the generalized *run* encodes a quick self-agentive bipedal locomotion of an unspecified kind. Let me add at this point that, as is well known, the verb *run* is, in comparison with *walk* as its most natural counterpart, more prone to the changes in its lexico-semantic content, depending on the type of syntactic construction and the type of arguments taking up individual syntactic positions (cf. Ritter and Rosen 1996, Nida 1997, Kudrnáčová 2008: 13–17). In this connection, let me adduce one interesting example illustrating the categorial shift in the meaning of *walk* when deprived of its basic, physical meaning:

(11.3) Danielle /…/ did not have the good grace to shed a single tear as I walked out of the door and out of her life /.../. (BNC)

As is evident, the contrastive coordination of a change in metaphorical space ('disappearance in a psychic domain') with a kinetic change (i.e. 'a change in physical space') has a marked stylistic effect.

The elasticity of the verb's meaning (or, to be more precise, the verb's susceptibility to undergo changes in its meaning depending on the type of syntactic construction and the types of arguments) manifests itself clearly in transitive causative constructions expressing caused motion in which the verb's intrinsic ability to loosen its ties with its basic sense (that is, the verb's ability to lose reference to certain physical aspects of the basic type of motion) is utilized for the expression of coercive force exerted by the causer – cf., e.g., the sentence *She ran him home* (in the non-transportation sense). It should, however, be stressed that if no coercion is implied, *run* is not used in the generalized sense and designates the real "running". This is the case in certain scenarios expressed in SA constructions – cf., e.g., *The trainer ran the athletes around the track*. The non-coercive interpretation of the external causation of the movement of human causees in constructions with *run* needs quite an explicit context. With horses, the situation is different because "causing the horse to run", i.e. "causing the animal to execute a movement in which no feet are above the ground in a certain phase of the movement" (*The rider ran the horse to the stable*, e.g.), belongs to prototypical (frequent and normal) situations in the life of these animals – hence one can also trot (/pace/jog/canter/gallop/jump) a horse. The semantics of *run* in caused motion situations was dealt with in greater detail in Chapter (6.6). Here let me state only that given the fact that both the coercive caused motion scenario and its non-coercive version employ the same syntactic configuration, it is only logical that (apart from the semantics of the arguments, including path phrases) it is the preservation of the verb's basic meaning that serves as a signal for an absence of coercion.

In the light of the facts adduced so far, a logical question arises, namely, why in constructions expressing the external causation of self-agentive movements the generalized *run* can only be used in a coercive sense. The reason lies in the physical character of the movement encoded in the basic sense of the verb. As opposed to walking, running involves not only the changing of the relative positions of the parts of the moving body but, also, the exertion of force, which enables the mover to attain a speed needed for getting both feet above the ground. The basic sense of *run* thus serves as the basis from which the coercive use of the verb is derived.[41]

41 Let me mention in passing that this fact justifies the postulation of the basic, central sense of a verb, against which a variety of other senses are formed.

The potential usage of *march* may serve as evidence that this is the correct analysis. In its basic, military sense, the verb represents, very roughly, "walking accompanied by the exertion of a relatively higher degree of force". If *march* is used to encode a coercive caused motion situation, it does not represent this specific type of motion. In other words, neither the causee nor the causer actually "march" (cf. the discussion offered in Chapter 6.6). For example, in *The sergeant marched the recruits to the barracks,* the verb is used in its basic sense and no coercion is implied, whereas in *He marched her to the bathroom* the verb does not designate marching, hence coercion is implied. As has already been discussed in Chapter (6.6), the verb's partial loss of reference to certain physical aspects of the military marching serves as a signal of the presence of coercion. Let me note that this fact, again, testifies to the centrality of the basic sense of the verb.

As opposed to the verbs *walk, march* and *run,* the verbs *dance* and *swim* in caused motion constructions do not lend themselves to the process of semantic bleaching. For example, the sentences *He danced her round the ballroom* and *He swam her to the other end of the swimming-pool* only encode situations in which the causer induces the causee to execute dancing and swimming, respectively. The reason should, again, be sought in the physical character of the movements that these verbs designate. *Dance* and *swim* designate movements that include quite elaborate physical patterns whose execution requires that they be preserved in their entirety – for the verbs to be what they are meant to be. In other words, if *dance* and *swim* were deprived of their reference to some of the physical components of the movements in question, the result would not be an increase in the generality of the movement but a loss of its identity.

Quite symptomatically, then, if *swim* is used in a caused motion situation in a sense that differs from the basic (self-agentive locomotion) sense, the difference does not consist in the loss of reference to some physical features of the basic, self-agentive motion, but in a complete, categorial change of the verb's meaning. The verb does not designate a self-agentive motion of the causee: the causee (or, rather, the patient) is merely subject to the movement, i.e. he is not actively involved in the execution of the motion at all. Thus the meaning of *swim* in the phrase *swim a witch* is not "swimming" but, rather, "floating". Under similar circumstances, the verb *dance* also undergoes a categorial change of its meaning – cf., e.g., the sentence *He danced the baby on his knee* (*dance* here means "to dandle").

From these facts it follows that the conceptual re-evaluation of the meaning of the verbs *swim* and *dance* cannot be adduced as evidence

against the argumentation offered above, namely, that *swim* and *dance* in caused motion situations with agentive causees are not prone to the process of semantic bleaching. At the same time, one might point out that what may be called the "resistance" of the verbs *swim* and *dance* to the process of semantic bleaching is valid for situations that include the external causation of self-agentive motion. In internally caused self-motion situations, the verbs may be endowed with an evaluative potential, which is accompanied by the verb's increase in the vagueness of its reference. For example, the sentence *Helen danced into the kitchen* may mean either that Helen executed "dancing" on her way into the kitchen or that she moved into the kitchen in a way that (a) had certain physical features in common with "real dancing" and that (b) signalled her positive mental state.

As has been briefly mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the verb *waltz* is admitted into SA constructions (which, to repeat, admit verbs designating general types of movement and which are, at the same time, devoid of coercive causation of motion) in spite of the fact that this verb designates a very specific type of movement, a sub-type of the more general "dancing", cf.:

(11.4) He felt that if he waltzed his dancers round and round as in a ballroom he would not be interpreting Chopin's idealised romantic waltzes for a solo pianist. (BNC)

It cannot be denied that the potential of the verb *waltz* to be utilized in SA constructions runs counter to the tendency to reserve these constructions, for reasons discussed above, for the expression of very general types of self-agentive movement. At the same time, it cannot be overlooked that *waltz* in caused motion situations does not necessarily have to refer to "dancing a waltz". The verb may undergo, albeit to a limited degree, the process of semantic bleaching. Consider:

(11.5) With a silly smile on his face, Daniel grasped her around the waist and waltzed her across the almost empty parking lot outside the Center. They spun around and around, laughing and singing, until they were giddy. (http://www.pandemonium.me.uk/stargate/doubletrouble5.htm)

To repeat, an increase in the generality of the verb's meaning may be accompanied by an increase in the evaluativeness of the presentation of the motion situation (as will have been noticed, this also happens when

run and *march* are used in their more general sense). In concrete terms, the verb *waltz* may be used as an indicator of the inner state of the mover. The verb here fulfils an indexical role. The evaluative function of the verb, accompanied by the verb's decrease in the concreteness of its reference, can be illustrated in the following example:

(11.6) Antonia fantasised about chauffeur-driven cars, wearing big hats and being waltzed through the doors of Number 10. (BNC)

In sum, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate that
(a) the interpretation of the meaning of SA constructions is dependent on the semantics of the verb, on the types of participants and relationships holding between them, on the presence and type of spatial goals and, last but not least, on the character of the background situation in which the movement is set
(b) the potential of the constructions in question to express a variety of pragmatic meanings that are superimposed on the basic causative frame (i.e. on the external causation of self-agentive locomotion) is closely linked to the lexico-semantic content of the verbs that are admitted into the constructions.

11.1 A Note on Accompaniment Scenarios

The analysis of SA constructions with the verb *walk* used in accompaniment scenarios yields two types of situation.

(I) In the first type, the causer makes it happen that the causee walks somewhere and at the same time actively participates, in some way or other, in the movement carried out by the causee. The causer's co-movement may involve helping the causee or, by contrast, forcing the causee to walk (it should be stressed that these additional aspects are borne by the context, not by the SA construction itself). In these cases, the force-dynamic schema is imbalanced. Consider, e.g.:

(11.7) They pulled me up off the floor with my hands up behind my back and they were walking me out of the chemist with my arms up and my head pushed down and one of them was kicking me in the back of my legs to get me over to the car. (BNC)
(11.8) He went back for the President, lifting him from behind by

both elbows and walking him into the shower with his boxer shorts and his sandals on. The President walked well enough, no struggle. (BNC)

(11.9) She completed her speech with a deep sigh and an extra hug for Frankie. He wanted to weep. /…/ The policeman with the moustache was still grinning. "Look, George, why don't you walk the boy on ahead while I have a private word with his mother?" Sweetheart smiled and released Frankie into the care of the other man, who gripped him by the shoulder and looked terribly stern. "Go ahead, dear," she insisted. "Mummy won't be a moment." (BNC)

(II) In the second type of situation, the co-movement of the causer takes on the features of 'accompaniment'. The force-dynamic schema is thus more balanced (this is the reason why Palmer (1974: 92) takes the sentence *He walked the children across the road* as involving "little or no causation").

The accompaniment situation appears to involve two types of scenario:

(a) "the causer makes it happen that the causee walks somewhere and acts as a co-mover"

(b) "the causer wants to accompany the causee on his way somewhere and acts as a co-mover"

In fact, the situation specified in (IIa) has an intermediate status in that it combines features both from the situation in (I) (namely, the fact that the causer "causes the causee to walk") and from the situation specified in (IIb), namely, "the accompaniment". The situation in (IIa) is expressed in

(11.10) He walked her to the centre of the room, and let her go. She tottered, and put her arms out. (BNC)

(11.11) /…/ the old vixen was walking them higher up into the mountain for safety. (BNC)

(11.12) He glanced at the wag-at-the-wall clock. "We'd better be getting a move on. I'll walk you to the tram stop, Maggie. It's on my way." That was kind of him, she thought. (BNC)

In the situation specified in (IIb), the causer only co-moves with the causee. It is the causee that has the prior intention to walk somewhere. Cf. the situation encoding the absence of the causee's intention "to walk" in the following example:

(11.13) There's a breeze springing up over the lake. Come on, I'll walk you to the house." "I 'm not going back," she said, standing her ground. (BNC)

Here, the causer's intention is not "to cause the causee to walk to the house". It is, in fact, the causee that "wants (i.e. that has the prior intention) to walk to the house". In other words, the starting point of this motion situation is the causee, not the causer. The causee is thus the bearer of primary responsibility for the occurrence of the movement (of the walking) and the causer acts as a co-mover, not as a participant that brings about the causee's motion.

In the light of these facts, it may be maintained that John is not "the causer" and, by the same token, that Harry is not "the causee". Note, however, that the prominent position in the syntactic construction is occupied by John, not by Harry (that is, John occupies the subject position, reserved for controlling participants, and Harry occupies the direct object position, reserved for controlled participants). This discrepancy between meaning and form is a seeming one only. The causer appears in the subject position because he is the executor of the intention that transcends the motion itself (i.e. that goes beyond the movement itself). In concrete terms, John is the executor of the intention "to accompany somebody on his way somewhere". This makes it possible to render the accompaniment scenario by means of the SA construction, in which a single verb denotes a movement that is predicated both of the causer and of the causee.

The accompaniment scenario in (IIb) enables the causee to ask the causer to accompany him (cf. ex. 11.14a) or, conversely, to resist the causer's wish to accompany him (cf. ex. 11.14b):

(11.14) a) Harry wanted John to walk him to the station.
b) Harry did not want John to walk him to the station.

The situations in (11.14a) and (11.14b) may be instantiated by way of the following examples:

(11.15) "/…/. Now, may I walk you home?" "No, thank you," Hari said quickly, she wanted to be alone to sort out her muddled thoughts. (BNC)

(11.16) "When are you going?" "Now. I'm all packed up and ready for off." "Will you at least let me walk you down to the station?" "Of course." Mark reappeared from somewhere. (BNC)

(11.17) He insisted on walking her home but she ran off at the corner. He wasn't pleased with himself. (BNC)
(11.18) She didn't want to go—but she wanted me to walk her downstairs. I didn't want to walk her. I said sorry, I'm tired. (BNC)

As attested by examples (11.15 – 11.17), the causee does not have to be willing to submit to the causer's prior intention that transcends the movement. By the same token, the causee may be willing to submit to it as is the case in ex. (11.18). It is clear that willingness is a scalar concept. The causee can thus be willing to submit to the causer's prior intention (that which transcends the motion) to varying degrees. By the same token, the causer may also be willing to execute his prior intention to accompany the causee to varying degrees. Note in this connection the use of *insist on somebody* in ex. (11.17), which expresses explicit pressure on the part of the causer. In ex. (11.16), by contrast, a relatively low degree of pressure is implied (the causer asks for the causee's permission).

By way of concluding this short discussion, it should be pointed out that some accompaniment situations are open for both the interpretation specified in (IIa) and the interpretation specified in (IIb). In such cases, it is the context that plays a role in discriminating between the two types of scenario (the role of the context has been noted in the situation specified in (I) as well). The accompaniment scenario "proper" (situation IIb) may be illustrated by way of ex. (11.19):

(11.19) "A sudden decision?" She went and got her raincoat. "That's right. I've decided I'd rather be back in my own country." "Worried?" I asked. "I'm probably being hypersensitive, but sure. I'll pick the file up tomorrow afternoon. Say three o'clock on my way to Heathrow?" "Fine." I put the file down on top of my coffee table. The clock on the mantelpiece chimed the half-hour, seven thirty, as I walked her to the door. I opened it and we stood for a moment, rain driving down hard. (BNC)

In some cases, even the context does not provide unequivocal information about the type of scenario:

(11.20) "D", my husband, didn't accept me loving another girl when I told him I was a lesbian, but after a while he accepted me as Carla -- 100 per cent. In fact, he was the one who encouraged me to go down to the Lesbian and Gay Centre in Edinburgh. He walked me to the door with the kids in tow and said that

we could all have a look inside, the kids as well, but even though I was shaking from head to toe, I said eventually, after we walked past the place at least four times, if I was going to do this I might as well do it on my own. (BNC)