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SAME BUT DIFFERENT

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Six ways are surveyed in which a single phonological stem can correspond to material with different syntactic distributions, meanings, or uses: synchronically unsystematic identities of stems for different lexemes; three types of systematic grammatical relationships (zero derivation, alternative subcategories, and systematic subsenses); and two types of systematic extragrammatical relationships (extragrammatical conventions of use and nonconventional pure coercion).

The impetus for this brief note[1] was the claim, by Charles Fillmore and Paul Kay, in a manuscript draft,[2] that various uses of the same stem in different syntactic contexts result from zero derivations, 'phonologically vacuous constructions of derivational morphology' (a.k.a. conversions). The relationships in question include those between the a and b examples below.

(1) a. She threw a rock.
b. She threw me a rock.

(2) a. Ann opened a can of peas.
b. Ann opened Bob a can of peas.

(3) a. The top spun.
b. Nell spun the top.

(4) a. Nell spun the top.
b. Nell spun the top off the table.

My goal in this note is not to decide whether such claims are true, or even to muse about them.[3] I have the much more modest aim of trying to enumerate the ways in which 'same phonology, different synsem'[4] can come about: material which corresponds to stems with the same phonological makeup (P), but which has different syntactic distributions, meanings, or uses (S1, S2). There are at least six different cases, Types 0 through 5 below.[5]

An Exclusion

Type 0. PHENOMENA TO EXCLUDE. I put aside relationships between S1 and S2 that are not systematic. The unsystematic examples include those where the morphology indicates no special relationship (permission ALLOW in *Sandy allowed them to go* and speech-report ALLOW in *Sandy grudgingly allowed that they had gone*) and those where it does (activity DO in *Yes, I did it* and supportive DO in *I DID think that was odd*, which share their extraordinary morphology).

These pairs involve clearly different lexemes, but the lexemes share phonology (and sometimes morphology as well). I would imagine that some speakers treat them as quite unrelated, while other speakers perceive some sort of relationship. But, in any case, there are not parallel relationships running across many different examples. In all of the remaining types there are; these are the types I'm really concerned with.

Grammatical Relationships

At least three types of systematic relationships are, it seems to me, pretty clearly matters of grammar.

Type 1. ZERO DERIVATION. In this type, the relationship between S1 and S2 is a relationship between the syntax/semantics of distinct lexemes – just as in everyday (non-zero) derivation, except that the corresponding phonological properties, P1 and P2, are identical.

As an example, consider the relationship between manner-of-speaking verbs (WHINE, SCREAM, WHISPER, etc.) and the corresponding nouns (Zwicky 1971): *Kim whined mournfully*; *Kim gave a mournful whine*. This example is clearly 'category changing', but nothing I know of would require that zero derivation involve distinct major categories. So the relationships between the a and b verbs in (1) through (4) are candidates for classification as zero derivation – as a matter of rules of grammar (of morphology, in particular) relating pairs of lexemes (that is, relating their phonological, morphological, morphosyntactic, syntactic, and semantic properties).

Type 2. ALTERNATIVE SUBCATEGORIES. An intuition many linguists have had – an intuition I tend to share – is that the lexeme GIVE in *I gave a book to Terry* is the same as the one in *I gave Terry a book*: same phonology, morphology, major syntactic category, and semantics. Nevertheless, the two are instances of somewhat different syntactic subcategories (each corresponding to a syntactic construction in which the lexeme can serve as head). That is, among the syntactic properties of this lexeme are the two: (1) eligible to be head in construction 51 (TO-dative) and (2) eligible to be head in construction 52 (double NP object).

(I'm not proposing a system of representation here. All I care about is that properties (1) and (2) can somehow be associated with the lexeme GIVE. This can be achieved by brute force – listing subcat(head, 51) and subcat(head, 52) among the properties of GIVE – or by predicting (1) and (2), by general principles, from the semantics of GIVE, or by something in between.)

If the GIVE example seems unconvincing to you, there are plenty of uncontroversial examples. The English auxiliaries, for example, are all verbs that are eligible to be head in a number of distinct constructions: clausal negation realized as an inflectional property of the head V (*I won't do it*), clausal negation realized by *not* located after the head V (*I will not do it*), ellipsis of a complement after the head V (*I said I'd do it, and I will*), etc. We don't want to say that *must* in *You*

mustn't touch that, You must not touch that, I don't have to touch that, but you must, etc. are instances of different lexemes.

The a and b examples in (1) through (4) above are excellent candidates for analysis as the same verb lexeme (THROW, OPEN, SPIN, and SPIN, respectively) with two different subcategorizations. The intuition behind this analysis is that the verbs have the same meanings in the a and b sentences, with any semantic differences contributed by the constructions themselves.

Type 3. SYSTEMATIC SUBSENSES. Type 1 above is homonymy. This case is polysemy, in which more specific senses exist alongside a general sense, or extended senses alongside a more specific one. So, alongside the general 'transfer' sense of GIVE and SEND, there is a more specific 'donation' sense in *We gave/sent $100 to the church* (in which the recipient is some sort of institution or cause); and alongside the general 'travel' sense of SAIL and FLY (*Tied up by the kidnapers, I sailed/flew across the lake*), there is a more specific agentive sense in *I skillfully sailed/flew across the lake.*

There are two problems here. One is the notorious difficulty of distinguishing homonymy from polysemy. The other is the question of to what extent these general/specific relationships are systematic. On the latter point: it is typical for there to be some number of items exhibiting both senses, but for there to be otherwise parallel items that occur only in the general sense (HAND; TRAVEL) and still others that occur only in the specific sense (DONATE; DRIVE). So there is some question as to whether there are systematic relationships here at all. If there are, the existence of lexical exceptions of various kinds would seem to demonstrate that the relationships are to be described by rules of grammar, of some sort (and of some sort different from derivational rules – though possibly they could express relationships between alternative subcategorizations).

It's possible that the a and b examples in (1) through (4) are to be analyzed as involving a more general subsense in the a examples and a more specific one in the b examples (where their meanings would be compatible with the more complex semantics of the surrounding constructions).

Extragrammatical Relationships

Type 4. (EXTRAGRAMMATICAL) CONVENTIONS OF USE. This much is grammar. But not everything that's conventional within a speech community is a matter of grammar. There can be systematic, but extragrammatical, conventions of use. The point was made clearly by Morgan 1978 with respect to indirect speech acts, by Nunberg 1978 with respect to metonymies, by Ferguson 1982, 1983 and Culy 1996 with respect to specialized registers, by Zwicky 1986 with respect to poetic forms, and by Zwicky & Pullum 1987 with respect to various sorts of playful, expressive, and concealing forms of language. The extensive literature on systematic metaphors can be read as making the same point, and a study of conventions of quotation, naming, numeral systems, and many other phenomena would supply still more examples.

One candidate for this status is a metonymy discussed by Nunberg, whereby a phrase referring to some salient accompaniment of an individual can be used to refer to that individual, as in the waiter's comment *Now the fries wants a Coke too*. I don't think we want to say that there is some derivational rule of English that converts inflected nouns to base nouns. My guess is that it's conventional – Sadock tells me that parallel metonymies in Greenlandic Eskimo are just impossible – but it seems pretty clear to me that it's not derivation or alternative subcategorization, if for no other reason than that the conversion is of entire NPs to constituents with the syntax and semantics of proper names.

Distinguishing extragrammatical conventions from derivational rules can be quite tricky. The literature on transfers between count and mass (for nouns) and the various aspectual categories (for verbs) is quite unclear on just this point, and Michaelis 1999, at least, has worried about just these cases. Just where do we classify the conversions of mass nouns to count nouns of type or measure (*one beer* 'one type of beer' or 'one serving of beer')? These seem conventional – the possible interpretations of the resulting expressions are very much constrained – but are they matters of grammar (zero derivation, or possibly alternative subcategorization), or extragrammatical conventions?

The opposite conversions, of count nouns to mass nouns of material (*There was a lot of dog on the road, ugh*), seem to many English speakers to be truly creative uses of the existing material of the language – that is, instances of the next type.

Type 5. PURE COERCION. Here, speakers slot material of one type into contexts where it has to be understood in a (literally) unconventional way, if it's to be understood at all. This is where the verb *weird* of *Verbing weirds language* (from a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon) goes. And, possibly, my verb *Chinese* in *I Chinesed a lot of vegetables for dinner*. English has (as yet) no productive rule of zero derivation that would convert these adjectives into verbs. But if you do it on the fly, and the context supports it, you'll be understood as conveying 'make weird' and 'cook in the Chinese fashion', respectively. The adjectives *weird* and *Chinese* are (adapting Pustejovsky's 1995 term) 'coerced' into verbhood or (using Talmy's 1988 vocabulary) 'implicity converted' into verbs.[6]

These purely coercive uses of words do occur, with some frequency; they're one of the types of 'poetic' language in everyday behavior.

Such uses are creative, from the point of view of the speakers, and noticeable, from the point of view of those who hear them. Closely related are coinages that creatively violate rules of derivational morphology (the famous *uncola*), the use of mentioned bound morphemes (or even just word-parts) as free-standing words (*ism* has managed to make it into the American Heritage Dictionary by this route), and nonsense-word creation. Rather more distantly related are novel metaphors and nonconventionalized indirect speech acts (remarking *It's cold* in an attempt to get someone to close the window, for instance). The domain of resourceful language use is a huge and varied territory.

Again, drawing the analytic line is difficult. What starts out as pure coercion can become extragrammatical convention, if enough people do it. And an extragrammatical convention can be reinterpreted as a rule of grammar, if enough people do it often enough; that would be an instance of *grammaticalization* in the sense of 'becoming grammatical (rather than extragrammatical)', not in its usual sense of 'becoming grammatical/functional (rather than concrete/lexical)'.

I assume that the actual status of particular phenomena at any given time in any given speech community can roam all over this map. Different speakers might have different systems; the systems of individual speakers might change over time; particular speakers might allow both creative and conventionalized formations with similar surface forms; and so on. There's absolutely no reason to think that everyone has to have the same system. All they have to do is mostly understand one another most of the time, which leaves a lot of room for many different coexisting systems, so long as the pronunciation/use pairings are roughly comparable.

NOTES

[1] Not the text of my Forum Lecture at the 1999 Linguistic Institute, but an exploratory note on a few issues raised in that lecture. The dedication of the lecture remains: to my colleague and friend Charles Ferguson.

[2] Fillmore & Kay themselves attribute this approach to unpublished work by Orhan Orgun and Jean-Pierre Koenig. The relevant data are some of them staples of the syntactic literature; others are more recent, from Jackendoff 1990 and Goldberg 1995, in particular.

[3] Don't tax Fillmore & Kay with anything you see here; they might well have changed their minds about how to analyze these phenomena.

[4] Where 'synsem' is adopted from HPSG (Pollard & Sag 1994).

[5] I want to make it clear that this is not just logic-splitting. I really believe that a good account of language structure and use should have a place for all of these, and that they should be treated as distinct – even if particular instances might be hard to place.

[6] I'm not suggesting that either Pustejovsky or Talmy uses these terms for exactly the phenomena I'm discussing here.

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