
Afterword

The primary goal of this book has been to substantiate the thesis that unaccusativity is semantically determined and syntactically encoded. Although this thesis is not new—as mentioned in chapter 1, it is essentially the original version of the Unaccusative Hypothesis proposed by Perlmutter (1978)—it has proved remarkably difficult to support in detail, since so much about the behavior of verbs has not been understood. It is not surprising, then, that in the course of trying to determine the lexical semantic underpinnings of unaccusativity, a variety of issues concerning the nature of the lexical semantic representation of verbs were touched upon, and certain insights into such representations have emerged.

Virtually all generative theories developed over the last fifteen years have taken major aspects of the syntax of sentences to be directly projected from the lexical properties of verbs and other predicators. Within the GB framework, this idea finds its expression in the various formulations of the Projection Principle (Chomsky 1981). In order to implement the Projection Principle, verbs must have structured lexical representations, whose structure can then determine major aspects of the syntax of a sentence. These representations may take the form of an argument structure, or they may be more semantic in nature, taking the form of a lexical semantic representation of some type.

One of the challenges facing theories that include a principle like the Projection Principle is the fact that many verbs can appear in a bewildering range of syntactic contexts. If this kind of variety turns out to be the rule rather than the exception, then maintaining the Projection Principle may entail a wholesale proliferation of lexical entries for verbs. On the other hand, it is possible to reject the basic insight behind the Projection Principle. A fundamental motivation behind the instantiation of the constructional approach developed by Hoekstra (1992) (see also Hoekstra

and Mulder 1990) is precisely the desire to deny the existence of structured lexical representations. On the constructional approach, a verb is associated with some basic concept that has no internal linguistic structure. Arguments are projected freely onto basic syntactic structures made available by languages; the exact meaning of a verb in a particular syntactic configuration is determined by the concept the verb is associated with in conjunction with the meaning associated with the syntactic structure. The meanings associated with these syntactic structures are similar in many respects to the meanings associated with the primitive predicates most commonly proposed in theories of predicate decomposition of meaning.

If the conclusions we have been drawing throughout the book are correct, then the central thesis of the constructional approach—that there are no structured lexical representations determining the syntax of a sentence—is not correct. First, our analysis of the resultative construction strongly suggests that verbs are basically paired with a particular number of arguments. Second, our analysis of the phenomenon of meaning shifts suggests that the regular association of verbs with multiple lexical entries is governed by some sort of lexical statement. Finally, our discussion of locative inversion suggests that unergative verbs do not project their arguments differently in this construction.

Whatever the final resolution of this particular issue turns out to be, certain other results emerge clearly from the study presented here. By far the most important is the isolation of a set of syntactically relevant meaning components. It is clear that progress in lexical semantics has been hampered by a failure to distinguish those aspects of meaning that are syntactically relevant from those that are not. We take it as an encouraging sign that the meaning components that we have isolated in this book bear a strong resemblance to the meaning components isolated by other researchers working in the same area. Although we do not presume to have said the final word on this topic, we hope to have presented a methodology for studying the lexical semantics–syntax interface, developed in the course of our work on unaccusativity, that can in the future be applied to other areas of the verb lexicon.

Appendix A

Verb Classes and Their Members

In this appendix we list the members of the major intransitive verb classes discussed in this book. The lists given are those for the corresponding verb classes in B. Levin 1993. The section number identifying the verb class in Levin 1993 is given in parentheses following the class name. Where the name or composition of a class as used in this book differs from the usage in Levin 1993, we have noted this following the section number.

- (1) *Verbs of emission* (43)
 - a. *Verbs of light emission* (43.1): beam, blaze, blink, burn, flame, flare, flash, flicker, glare, gleam, glimmer, glint, glisten, glitter, glow, incandesce, scintillate, shimmer, shine, sparkle, twinkle
 - b. *Verbs of sound emission* (43.2): babble, bang, beat, beep, bellow, blare, blast, blat, boom, bubble, burble, burr, buzz, chatter, chime, chink, chir, chitter, chug, clack, clang, clank, clap, clash, clatter, click, cling, clink, clomp, clump, clunk, crack, crackle, crash, creak, crepitate, crunch, cry, ding, dong, explode, fizz, fizzle, groan, growl, gurgle, hiss, hoot, howl, hum, jangle, jingle, knell, knock, lilt, moan, murmur, patter, peal, ping, pink, pipe, plink, plonk, plop, plunk, pop, purr, putter, rap, rasp, rattle, ring, roar, roll, rumble, rustle, scream, screech, shriek, shrill, sing, sizzle, snap, splash, splutter, sputter, squawk, squeak, squeal, squelch, strike, swish, swoosh, thrum, thud, thump, thunder, thunk, tick, ting, tinkle, toll, toot, tootle, trill, trumpet, twang, ululate, vroom, wail, wheeze, whine, whirl, whish, whistle, whoosh, whump, zing
 - c. *Verbs of smell emission* (43.3): reek, smell, stink
 - d. *Verbs of substance emission* (43.4): belch, bleed, bubble, dribble, drip, drool, emanate, exude, foam, gush, leak, ooze, pour, puff, radiate, seep, shed, slop, spew, spill, spout, sprout, spurt, squirt, steam, stream, sweat
- (2) *Verbs of inherently directed motion* (51.1): advance, arrive, ascend, ?climb, come, ?cross, depart, descend, enter, escape, exit, fall, flee, go, leave, plunge, recede, return, rise, tumble
- (3) *Verbs of manner of motion* (51.3, Levin's "manner-of-motion verbs")
 - a. *Roll verbs* (51.3.1): bounce, coil, drift, drop, float, glide, move, revolve, roll, rotate, slide, spin, swing, turn, twirl, twist, whirl, wind