Studies on Atypical Object Constructions in Taiwan Southern Min

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Abstract   This paper discusses the atypical object constructions in Taiwan Southern Min (TSM). There are two atypical object constructions in TSM when the theme is deprofiled in the object position. First of all, the object position is vacuous and zero object construction arises, such as 伊真會唱 (He sings well) in TSM. The indefinite theme can be recovered from the meaning of the verb. Second, an unselected object occupies the object position. For example, in TSM, 老王昨天去搶銀行 (Wang robbed the bank yesterday), the object position is occupied by the location 銀行 (bank), not the theme 錢 (money). According to Goldberg's semantic recoverability (2005), the theme is incorporated into the meaning of the verb and can be traced back by an inference based on it.

Keywords   atypical object construction, zero object construction, semantic recoverability

1. Introduction

Transitive construction has been a complex phenomenon from the viewpoints of lexical structure and argument realization. There is no exception from Taiwan Southern Min (TSM) and Mandarin. Sometimes transitives appear as intransitives when its direct object is unrealized. For instance, in Mandarin, 吃 *'eat'* is a transitive verb and selects Theme as its object like 飯 *'rice'* to form 吃飯 *'eat rice'* VO construction. However, It can surface as an intransitive verb like 她很會吃 *'She can eat a lot'*. The direct object is unrealized. On the other hand, sometimes the object position is occupied by an unselected argument. For example, 三年來他都吃老闆 *'He has eaten on the boss for three years'* In this paper, we will observe these deprofiled arguments and compare the differences between TSM and Mandarin. Then, we try to propose a clear and reasonable analysis for them. In section 1, we give a brief introduction to the paper. In section 2, we introduce the theories related to the paper. In section 3, two atypical object constructions in Taiwan Southern Min are discussed separately. Finally, we make an overall conclusion in section 4.

2. Theoretical Grounding

2.1 Argument realization principle

There exist certain regularities in which arguments tend to be obligatorily expressed in languages. Grimshaw and Vikner (1993) first propose Argument Realization Principle (ARP) to capture these tendencies:

Argument Realization Principle (ARP):
There must be one argument XP in the syntax to identify each sub-event in the event structure template (Grimshaw and Vikner 1993)

There are four major classes of event structure listed as follows:

Event structure templates (Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998)

activity	[X ACT<MANNER>]
state	[X <STATE>]
achievement	[BECOME [X <STATE>]]
accomplishment	[X ACT<MANNER>] CAUSE [BECOME [Y <STATE>]]

The ARP requires that at least one argument associated with each sub-event in an event structure template must be syntactically expressed. One tendency is for theme arguments to be overtly expressed if a path of motion is predicated of them. For example, the ARP accounts for the unacceptability of example (1a).

(1) a. *Phil swept onto the floor (Rapport Hovav & Levin 1998, p.120).
    b. **Phil** ACT<swept>
       BECOME [**dust**<onto the floor.]
    c. Phil swept the dust onto the floor.

As illustrated in (1b), there are two independent subevents: the sweeping action and the motion of the dust onto the floor that is caused by the sweeping. The sweeping action is identified by the subject argument; the motion subevent demands that the theme argument ('dust') be overtly realized as well. That is, the ARP requires that both arguments be overtly expressed as they are in (1c).

Besides, take causative verbs for example. Causative verbs should obligatorily express the argument that undergoes the change of states. That is, the decomposition of a causative expression such as *The owl killed its prey* is given in (2):

(2) The owl killed its prey.
    The owl ACT<killed>
    BECOME <**prey** killed>

The ARP stipulates that an argument must identify the second sub-event designating a change of state; therefore the patient argument must be overtly expressed. The idea is supported by the illformedness of (3). The patient argument is not realized and that is why it is ungrammatical.

(3) *The owl killed.

To sum up, the ARP claims that verbs are claimed to be intransitive if and only if they designate single events; on the other hand, verbs are claimed to be obligatorily transitive if and only if they designate complex events (Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1998).

2.2 Counterexamples to the ARP
According to the ARP, we can capture the following two generalizations:

I.   If motion is predicated of a theme argument, the theme argument is generally overtly expressed.
II.   If a change of state is predicted of a patient argument, the patient argument is generally overtly expressed.

However, many languages, including English and Chinese, allow any argument to be unexpressed

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as long as it represents given and non-focal information. These exceptional cases lead us to consider constructional, detailed lexical semantic factors and lead to a deeper understanding of the general tendencies that exist.

2.2.1 Implicit theme arguments

There exist examples (4a) to (4c)) to cast doubt on the generality of the explanation the ARP gives:

(4) a. Pat contributed to the Leukemia Foundation.
b. Margaret sneezed onto the computer screen.
c. Sam pissed into the grass.

In each of examples (4a)-(4c), the theme argument is unexpressed despite the appearance of an overt direction. The ARP is undermined by the verbs of bodily emission (*sneeze, piss,* etc.), and contribution (*contribute, donate,* etc.) in English. The semantic decomposition of (4a)-(4c) is given in (5a)-(5c) separately:

(5) a. **Pat** ACT<contributed>
   BECOME [**money**<to the Leukemia Foundation>]
b. **Margaret** ACT<sneezed>
   BECOME [**mucus**<onto the computer screen>]
c. **Sam** ACT<pissed>
   BECOME [**urine**<into the grass>]

These verbs can appear without their theme argument expressed. A direct object is syntactically incorporated into the verb. Therefore, the ARP could be claimed on a level of underlying representation. Semantic decomposition does not itself directly determine argument realization. In the examples (4a)-(4c), the verb semantically incorporated the theme argument. That is, the direct object is syntactically incorporated into the verb in the examples (4a)-(4c).

2.2.2 Implicit patient arguments

Recall that the ARP predicts that causative events, which have two subevents, should necessarily always have two overt arguments. However, causative verbs often actually allow patient arguments to be omitted under certain conditions. The examples (6a) and (6b) illustrate this phenomenon:

(6) a. The chef-in-training chopped all afternoon.
b. Owls only kill at night.

The semantic decomposition of (6a) and (6b) is given in (7a) and (7b) separately:

(7) a. **The chef-in-training** ACT<chopped>
   BECOME <**food** chopped>
b. **The owl** ACT<killed>
   BECOME <**prey** killed>

Each of the examples in (6) retains its change of state meaning. Example (6a) designates a scene in which something was chopped, thus undergoing a change of state. Example (6b) designated a scene in which owls cause some unspecified animals to die. However, in these two cases, the patient argument is semantically incorporated into the verb. Moreover, the direct object is syntactically incorporated into the verb, too.

To summarize, semantic decomposition does not itself directly determine argument realization: the Argument Realization Principle cannot be correct as it stands. These exceptional cases lead us to

consider constructional, detailed lexical semantic factors and lead to a deeper understanding of the general tendencies that exist.

2.3 Constructional approach

Goldberg (2005) suffices the generalizations of the ARP by proposing that the overt argument is determined by two interaction factors: lexical semantics and construction. Argument structure generalizations, like lexical predicates, have semantic roles associated with them. Following Goldberg (1995), these are termed argument roles and correspond roughly to traditional thematic roles such as agent, patient, instrument, source, theme, location, etc. Only certain argument roles are considered 'profiled'. In the case of simple English clauses, only roles that are realized as subject, direct object, or the second object in ditransitives are consider profiled.

In addition, each verb is assumed to be conventionally associated with a certain number of participant roles. Only a subset of those roles, namely those roles that are lexically profiled, are obligatorily expressed. Lexical profiling, parallel to argument profiling, is designed to indicate which participant roles associated with a verb's meaning are obligatorily accessed, function as focal points with the scene, and achieve a special degree of prominence. Certain types of argument role are inherently more likely than others to be profiled and therefore obligatorily expressed. For example, animate roles are generally more salient and central to the scene being expressed than place or location roles (Goldberg 1995).

To sum up,

(A) Participant roles: roles associated with a sense of a verb
      Profiled participant roles: a subset of participant roles that are normally obligatorily expressed.
(B) Argument roles: roles associated with an argument structure construction
      Profiled argument roles: roles of a construction that appear as subject, object, or second object of ditransitives.

A participant role of the verb must be fused with an argument role of a construction in order to be overtly expressed. According to Goldberg (2005), two principles constrain the ways in which the participant roles of a verb and the arguments of a construction can be put into correspondence: the Semantic Coherence Principle and the Correspondence Principle:

(A) The semantic Coherence Principle: the participant role of the verb and the argument role of the construction must be semantically compatible. In particular, the more specific participant role of the verb must be construable as an instance of the more general argument role.
(B) The Correspondence Principle: the semantically salient profiled participant roles are encoded by grammatical relations that provide them a sufficient degree of discourse prominence: i.e., by profiled argument roles. An exception arises if a verb has three profiled roles; in this case, one can be represented by an unprofiled argument role and realized as an oblique argument.

2.4 Transitive surfaces as intransitive

Generally speaking, a transitive verb is defined with a direct object to form VO construction. However, Fillmore (1986) proposed the concept of "zero anaphora". Some of a predicate's complements are obligatory; others are optional. Take *eat* for example. It can occur with or without a direct object, but, when used intransitively, the unrealized object can roughly represent as an indefinite reading—STUFF. From semantic point of view, these surface intransitives have to be deep structure transitives in order to have objects capable of receiving the verb's selectional features.

2.4.1 Indefinite null complement (INC) vs. definite null complement (DNC)

The missing object of the surface-intransitive verbs is either definite or indefinite (Fillmore 1969). For instance, the missing object of *eat* is indefinite; the missing object of *promise* is definite. Definite null complements are with the potential of having contextually definite interpretation, and can be immediately retrieved from the context. On the other hand, like *He is eating*, the null complement is indefinite, an understood object roughly represented as the word STUFF. The missing object is not necessarily realized by context. It can be used intransitively on the surface structure. The verb's activity may be viewed as self-sufficient without an object.

2.5 Motivation for the deprofiled object construction

What motivates the surface-intransitive construction? Goldberg (2005) proposes semantic recoverability as a necessary condition on argument omission. Speakers will simply not be understood if they refer to unexpressed arguments that are not recoverable in context. The deprofiled arguments, usually Theme (or Patient), are predictable and the identity of the theme argument is semantically recoverable by an inference or entailment based on the meaning of verbs. Take *drink* for example. The verb *drink* clearly has two participant roles, the drinker and the liquid. The deprofiled liquid role is predictable from the meaning of the verb *drink* thus can be omitted. *He drinks* is grammatical.

2.6 Implicit theme construction

In this section, we account for the particular construction in the grammar of English: the Implicit Theme Construction. As mentioned, the identity of the theme argument is semantically recoverable by an inference based on the meaning of the verb. Recall that verbs of bodily emission and contribution can appear without an overtly expressed theme argument. The construction can be drawn as follows:

Semantic: CAUSE-MOTION (source	theme	direction)	
PRED bodily emission, contribution			
Syntax:	Subj	Ø	Oblique

Figure 1: The Implicit Theme Construction

The top line of Figure 1 represents the semantics of the construction. Figure 1 also specifies the way the semantic arguments are overtly realized syntactically: The source argument is linked with the subject, the direction argument is linked with an oblique argument, and the theme argument is unexpressed. "PRED" represents a variable over verb meaning.

2.7 Resultative preverbs

McIntyre (2003) discusses the phenomena of the argument-structural effects of preverbs. The phenomenon of unselected objects, i.e. objects of complex verbs which do not correspond to the selection restrictions of the simplex verbs, is illustrated in the paper. Result predicates and preverbs involved in &CAUSE structures may predicate over a direct object, regardless of whether it happens to be one selected by the verb when no result predicate is present. The majority of preverbs are able to be analysed as mapping onto a predicate in a result conjunct introduced by &CAUSE in a conflation structure. For example, in *out*-prefixed verbs, *out*V y means 'V better/more than y, surpass with respect to V'.

  outcompete, outdance, outfight, outrun, outdrink

  Fred outdrank Stan DO (FRED, DRINK) & CAUSEOUTDONE (STAN)

As in resultatives, we find direct objects which are OUTDONE. OUTDONE introduces a new subevent into the semantic representation involving an entity which is asserted to be outdone, whether or not this entity happens to correspondent to the verb's normal object selection requirements.

Like resultatives, the "perfective" preverbs mostly co-occur with direct arguments, sometimes with unselected objects. It can be divided into two subclasses:

Type 1: the preverb does not add a new result event to the simplex, so that a transitive verb may retain its selection restrictions. A good example is *eat up*. Eat and eat up are not identical. Compare intransitive uses like I *eat up* (asserts the entire consumption of a specific portion of food) vs. I *ate* (no implication that none was left over). This is explicable under the assumption that intransitive *eat* lacks the BECOME conjunct, while intransitive *eat up* has a BECOME conjunct in which the theme has been suppressed.

> Gwen ate the cakes up/ Gwen ate the cakes
>
> [Event DO (GWEN, EAT)] &CAUSE [Event BECOME (NONEXIST (CAKES))]

TYPE 2: the preverb contributes a result predication not present in the simplex verb. One subclass introduces unselected object,

> Fred chatted Mary up (he got Mary in a desired state by chatting to her')
>
> [Event DO (FRED, CHAT)] &CAUSE [Event BECOME (READY (MARY))]

while the other class does not affect the transitivity of the simplex.

> Cecil used up the resources.
>
> [Event DO (CECIL, <ACTIVITY>)][BY-MEANS-OF (RESOURCES)] &
>
> [Event BECOME (NONEXIST (RESOURCES))]

The argument linking properties of 'perfective' complex verbs are the same as those resultative constructions.

The above description of transitive complex verbs needs to be augmented by some observations on the types of arguments contributed by prepositional preverbs. A prepositional element often expresses a relation between two entities, a theme (also called a trajectory, figure, or locatum) and a reference object (landmark, ground), where the latter is used in specifying the location of the former.

> a. I wiped [the dust]Theme off [the table]Reference object
>
> b. I wiped [the dust]Theme off
>
> c. I wiped [the table] Reference object off

Table 1 gives a list of the possibilities pf linking of themes and reference objects in complex verbs.

TYPE	Subject	Object	Examples
A1	Agent	Theme	*I pumped the water out.* *I offloaded the books.*
A2	Theme		*I ran in.* *I walked off.*
B1	Agent	Reference Object	*The doctor pumped his stomach out.* *I filled the hole in.*
B2	Theme	Reference Object	*The river overflowed its banks.* *I overstepped the line.*
B3	Reference Object		*The pot overflowed.* *The pen ran out.*

Table 1: Themes and reference objects in complex verbs

The main distinction is between types A (reference object not linked) and B (reference object linked). To sum up, cases where preverbs have the effect of introducing unselected objects result when conflation introduces an extra subevent to the verbs's meaning, an effect also seen with standard resultative and perfect constructions.

After summarizing the concepts related to our discussion, we will explore the indefinite deprofiled arguments of transitive construction in Taiwan Southern Min and Mandarin.

3. Implicit Theme Construction in TSM

3.1 Transitives surface as intransitives

In Taiwan Southern Min, there exist transitive verbs with intransitive construction. First, take a look at the following examples (8)-(16):

(8) 伊真會食
'He can eat a lot.'

(9) 伊真會開
'He spends a lot.'

(10) 伊真會唱
'He can sing well.'

(11) 伊真會寫
'He can write well.'

(12) 伊真會趁
'He can make a lot of money.'

(13) 伊真會灌
'He can drink a lot.'

(14) 伊尚未娶
'He doesn't marry yet.'

(15) 伊尚未嫁
'She doesn't marry yet.'

(16) 他們尚未離
'They don't divorce yet.'

The verbs 吃'eat'、開'spend'、唱'sing'、寫'write'、趁'make money'、灌'drink'、娶'marry'、嫁'marry' are originally transitive, taking Theme as their objects. However, in examples (8)-(16), they surface as intransitives. Take '伊真會食' for example. The semantic decomposition of '食' is given in (17):

(17) **He** ACT<eat>
BECOME <**food** eaten>

The construction of the verb'食'can be drawn as follows:

Semantic: ACT (agent   theme)
PRED digestion
Syntax: Subj   Ø

Figure 2: The Implicit Theme Construction of '食'

The missing argument is indefinite and thus can be predicted from the meaning of the verb. The following examples have similar phenomena:

Verb	typical transitive construction	intransitive usage	unrealized argument — Theme(indefinite)
(18) 開 'spend'	開錢 'spend money'	伊很會開 'He spends a lot.'	Money
(19) 食 'eat'	食飯 'eat rice'	伊真會食 'He can eat a lot.'	Food
(20) 灌	灌茶	伊很會灌	Liquid

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'drink'	'drink water'	'He can drink a lot.'	
(21) 寫 'write'	寫字 'write words'	伊很會寫 'He can write well.'	Words
(22) 唱 'sing'	唱歌 'sing a song'	伊真會唱 'He can sing well.'	Songs
(23) 趁 'make'	趁錢 'make money'	伊真會趁 'He can make a lot of money.'	Money
(24) 娶 'marry'	娶某 'marry someone'	伊還沒娶 'He doesn't marry yet.'	Wife
(25) 嫁 'marry'	嫁尢 'marry someone'	伊還沒嫁 'She doesn't marry yet.'	husband
(26) 離 'divorce'	離婚 'divorce'	他們尚未沒離 'They don't divorce yet.'	marriage

However, there seems different condition in examples (27) and (28):

(27) a. 伊在台北趁
　　　'He makes money as a prostitute in Taipei.'
　　b. 伊在台北趁錢
　　　'He makes money in Taipei.'
(28) a. 伊真會喝
　　　'He can drink a lot of alcohol.'
　　b. 伊真會喝水
　　　'He can drink a lot of water.'

(27a) and (28a) are not paraphrases of (27b) and (28b) separately. They don't have the same meaning. In (27a), 趁'make' not only means making money, it also implies the special way-- as a prostitute-- to make money. In (28a), the deprofiled Theme is not the generic sense of liquid. The argument is narrowed down as alcohol, not all kinds of liquid. Thus, 趁'make' and 喝'drink' should be lexicalized as two different senses: one is generic and the other is specific.

Therefore, there are two different kinds of surface-intransitive verbs in TSM. It depends on the meaning of the verb. Most of the surface-intransitive verbs have the same underlying lexical structure with the transitive ones like examples (8)-(16). The implicit argument can be recovered from its meaning of verb. On the other hand, in examples (27)-(28), the implicit argument is specific and can not be predicted from the meaning of the verbs. Thus, they should be lexicalized as two different lexical items in our lexicon.

3.2 Atypical objects in transitives

The participant roles of a single event structure may be more than argument positions. Thus, some participant roles should be deprofiled. Goldberg (2005) proposes semantic recoverability as a necessary condition on argument omission. The deprofiled arguments, usually Theme, are predictable and the identity of the theme argument is semantically recoverable by an inference based on the meaning of verbs. There is no exception for TSM. Take 搶'rob' for example. The participant roles involved in the event structure of '搶' are Agent(robber), Theme(money), and Location. Agent is realized as subject, Theme as object, and Location as oblique like 伊昨天去銀

行搶錢'*He robbed money from the bank yesterday.*' However, sometimes the Theme is deprofiled and the Location takes the object position like 伊昨天搶銀行'*He robbed the bank yeaterday.*'. Theme is predictable from the meaning of '搶' and thus can be implicit. The construction can be drawn as follows:

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Semantic: CAUSE-MOTION (agent   theme   location)
          PRED 搶
Syntax:                   Subj    Ø      Obj
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Figure 3: The Implicit Theme Construction of '搶'

The following examples have similar phenomena:

Verb	typical transitive construction	atypical transitive usage	Semantic role of realized argument	deprofiled argument
(29) 搶 '*rob*'	搶錢 '*rob money*'	搶銀行 '*rob the bank*'	Location	Theme
(30) 偷提 '*steal*'	偷提錢 '*steal money*'	偷提三間 '*Steal from three stores*'	Location	Theme
(31) 刊 '*advertise*'	刊廣告 '*advertise*'	刊報紙 '*advertise on the newspapers*'	Location	Theme
(32) 駛 '*drive*'	駛車 '*drive a car*'	駛三圈 '*ride for three circles*'	Manner	Theme
(33) 騎 '*ride*'	騎車 '*ride a motorcycle*'	騎三點鐘 '*ride for three hours*'	Time	Theme
(34) 釘 '*nail*'	釘釘子 '*fasten a nail*'	釘壁 '*nail on the wall*'	Goal	Theme
(35) 開 '*spend*'	開錢 '*spend money*'	開查某 '*spend money on women*'	Goal	Theme
(36) 吃 '*eat*'	吃飯 '*eat rice*'	吃頭家 '*eat on the boss*'	Source	Theme
(37) 貿	貿工程	貿三千萬	Money	Theme
(38) 打	打店	打二百萬	Money	Theme

In example (31) '刊報紙', the theme '廣告' is incorporated into the verb and Location '報紙' occupies the surface object position. Although the Theme '廣告' is deprofiled, we can recover its meaning from the verb '刊'. On the contrary, '刊廣告' can not make a prediction of the Location from the meaning of verb 刊. Thus, Theme is easily traced back from the verb's meaning. The construction of verb'刊' is given as follows:

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Semantic: ACT (agent   theme   location)
          PRED 刊
Syntax:          Subj    Ø      Obj
```
Figure 4: The Implicit Theme Construction of '刊報紙'

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Let's take a look at another phenomenon. From the above-mentioned, besides typical construction (Subject-Agent, Object-Theme), 釘 *'nail'* can also have the implicit theme construction as follows:

Semantic: ACT (agent	theme	location)
PRED 釘		
Syntax: Subj	Ø	Obj

Figure 5: The Implicit Theme Construction of '釘壁'

In some cases, the deprofiled argument is the agent and the theme and the location are occupied subject and object position separately. 釘子釘在壁上 *'The nail was fasten on the wall'* is a good example. The subject position is occupies by '釘子'(theme) and the object position is occupied by '壁上'(location). The agent argument is deprofiled and not realized in the surface structure:

Semantic: ACT (agent	theme	location)
PRED 釘		
Syntax: Ø	Subj	Obj

Figure 6: The Implicit Agent Construction of '釘子釘在壁上'

4. Concluding Remarks

After the discussion, we can make a conclusion that there are two atypical object constructions in both TSM when the Theme is deprofiled in the object position. First of all, the object position is vacuous and zero object construction arises, such as 伊真會唱 *'He sings well'* in TSM. The indefinite Theme can be recovered from the meaning of verb. Thus, it can be deprofiled in the surface structure. Second, an unselected object occupies the object position. For example, in TSM, 老王昨天去搶銀行 *'Wang robbed the bank yesterday'*, the object position is occupied by the Location 銀行 *'bank'*, not the Theme 錢 *'money'*. According to Goldberg's semantic recoverability (2005), the Theme is incorporated into the meaning of the verb and can be traced back by an inference based on it.

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臺灣閩南語非典型賓語結構研究

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提要　本文主要在探討台灣閩南語的非典型賓語結構。台灣閩南語的非典型賓語結構分成兩種：第一種稱為零賓語結構，原本及物動詞的賓語隱藏起來，在表層結構中顯現為零賓語形式，例如「伊真會唱」，原先的客體「歌」被隱藏起來。另一種非典型賓語為不符合動詞語意選擇限制的賓語，例如「老王昨天去搶銀行」賓語位置被地點「銀行」所據，而非客體「錢」。然而，根據 Goldberg 的語意回復性理論，被隱藏起來的客體，可藉由動詞本身的語意在底層中得到回復。

關鍵詞　非典型賓語結構、零賓語結構、語意回復性