Polysemy and Valence Structure

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According to lexicalist theory, a verb is equipped with an argument structure determining its complement-taking properties (Müller and Wechsler 2014). This talk addresses the issues of innovation and alternation in complement patterns under the lexicalist view. I will explore an analysis grounded in the origins of lexical polysemy.

Words acquire new senses over time through mechanisms of invited inference and metonymy (Traugott and Dasher 2002). For example, some English words for sound emission come to denote the activity causing the sound: *to click* ('to make a thin, dry, hard sound') has acquired further senses in the context of computing: 'To press a mouse button; to activate a program function or select a particular item in this way.' The derived sense of a verb can license new complements: *Click through to the site*. New complements can be found even before the new sense is fully established: in *The tire hissed flat*, the verb *hiss* does not refer just to the creation of a sharp spirant sound, but rather to the activity causing the sound (in this case air leaking): it is the latter that causes the tire to flatten. This view of complement innovation due to a change in the verb is consonant with lexical coercion accounts (Pustejovsky 1995), including presupposition accomodation (Asher 2011), but not with views that take the 'construction' surrounding the verb, instead of the verb itself, to be polysemous (Iwata 2008).

Argument alternations such as *Mary loaded$_1$ the wagon. ~ Mary loaded$_2$ the hay* are analyzed by assuming speakers have a conceptual '*load*-frame' with all the obligatory and optional participants of loading events. An utterance of the word *load* evokes that frame concept. In addition, the word *load* is associated with various semantic relations between subsets of the frame participants, for the purpose of linguistic description of the conceptual frame (*The Polyrelational Theory*). The *holistic effect*, wherein the entire participant expressed as direct object, whether *the wagon* or *the hay*, is understood to be affected by the action (i.e., the object is in both cases the *incremental theme* in the sense of Krifka (1998)), is captured by the underlined portions of the conditions:

> **load1**(*e, x, y, t*) relates an event *e* with temporal trace *t* (a time interval), such that a loader *x* puts a load on or in a vehicle *y* for transport, and <u>the final point of *t* coincides with *y* being full</u>.   (ex. *Mary loaded the wagon.*)

> **load2**(*e, x, y, t*) relates an event *e* with temporal trace *t* (a time interval), in which a loader *x* places a load *y* on or in a vehicle for transport, and <u>the final point of *t* coincides with all of *y* being in the vehicle</u>.   (ex. *Mary loaded the hay*)

The existence of any unmentioned participants follows from the conceptual frame, not from existential quantification of variables in the linguistic description. Oblique arguments such as the PP in *Mary loaded the wagon with hay*, are added via preposition-denoted relations, as in Davidson (1967). The preposition lacks the temporal trace parameter so the obliques fail to induce holism. This explains the restriction of the

holistic effect to direct rather than oblique arguments. In contrast, if we were to assume that *load* denotes a single relation, whether **load**(e) (Neo-davidsonian) or **load**(e, x, y, z) (ordered argument system, where unexpressed arguments are existentially bound), then the holistic effect would remain unexplained.

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