

Sintassi e Semantica

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Lezione 1

Basic word order rules

- English, Italian: **SVO**
- Lakhota (Siouan language of North America): **SOV**
- Toba Batak (Austronesian language of Indonesia): **VOS** - opposite of Lakhota
- Russian: **irrelevant to interpretation**, form of words is crucial -> interface with morphology

- (1.1)
- | | |
|--|------------|
| a. The teacher is reading a book. | English |
| b. Waǰspekhiye ki wówapi wǰ yawá.
teacher the book a read | Lakhota |
| c. Manjaha buku guru i.
read book teacher the | Toba Batak |

- (1.2)
- a. Učitel'nica čitaet knigu.
teacher read book
 - b. Knigu čitaet učitel'nica.
book read teacher
 - c. Čitaet učitel'nica knigu.
read teacher book

Russian

Grammatical vs semantically anomalous or odd

- The book is reading the teacher.
- The table is talking to me.

Aspects of syntactic structure

- **Constituent structure:** NP, VP, PP ...
 - constituency tests: identification of bits of sentences that go together by i.e. displacing elements.
 - nesting of constituents.
- **Relational structure:** Subject, Object, Modifier ...
- Both aspects are always present in syntactic structures.

Lexical Categories

- Word Class
 - set of words whose members share one or more aspects of their morphological or syntactic behavior.

Morphological and Syntactic Criteria

- **Morphological Criteria**
 - Inflection: gender, number.
 - Conjugation: tense, person, mood.
- **Syntactic Criteria**
 - distribution: preceded by ART.
 - modification: modify by ADJ.

Distinctions

- Kinds of Word Classes:
 - Variable / Invariable.
 - Open / Closed.

What are the main word classes?

- Verb, Noun, Adjective, Adverb?, Preposition?
- Opinions about what constitutes a lexical class change over time. For example, early grammarians did not consider the class of adjectives to be an autonomous class, and included it in the class of nouns.

A word class is a cluster of properties

- Even though it is possible to assign a word to a class on the basis of a single property (for example, on morphological grounds), **class membership involves properties at different levels of linguistic analysis.**
- For example, nouns can be **inflected for number** (morphologic property) and **modified by adjectives** (syntactic property).

Semantic Correlates

- The question how to classify words on semantic grounds was already a matter of debate in classical antiquity. For example, Aristotle in his *Poetics* distinguished between *ónoma*, a word whose meaning is not endowed with temporality, and *rhēma*, a word whose meaning is endowed with a temporal dimension.

Ontological Correlates

- Modern linguists such as Lyons (1977) suggested that an adequate basis for semantic classification of words is the **ontological correlate**. According to this view, words may be grouped into coherent semantic classes by looking at the category of things they are typically associated with (the so-called **ontological category**).

Lyons's orders

Table 4.1 Types of entities on the basis of their order

Order of Entity	Type of Entity
1 st	persons, animals, places, things
2 nd	actions, events, processes, states of affairs
3 rd	possible facts

Lyon's orders and POS

Table 4.2 Types of entities and parts of speech

Order of Entity	Type of Entity	Part of Speech
1 st	persons, places, things	noun
2 nd	actions, events, processes, situations	verb

Givón's temporal stability

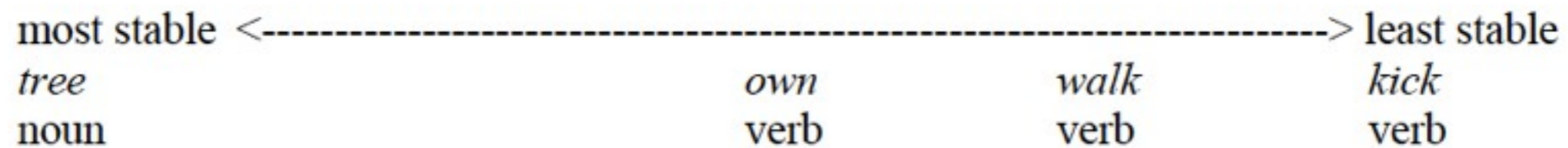


Fig. 4.1 Scale of temporal stability

Shortcomings

- Ontology-based classifications still leave some issues unaddressed, such as the fact that events are typically expressed by both verbs and nouns in language.
- Consider *sunset*, which refers to an event that occurs in time, and not to a physical object. Following Lyons' terminology, these are *second-order nouns* (*action nouns* in traditional grammar).

Reference vs. Predication

- Two discourse strategies (Hopper and Thompson (1984), Searle (1969)).
- Two fundamental activities of human reasoning, and thus as universal modalities of conceiving things and organizing our thought (Bossong 1992).

Reference, predication and POS

- Reference and predication are not, strictly speaking, two notions; they are two different ways of imposing form to notions.
- One and the same event can be either **predicated** of an entity, as with *burn* in “the house *is burning*,” or be introduced into the discourse as a **participant** of another event, as with *fire*: “*the fire* is spreading through the house”.

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