

CHAPTER 16

Prepositions

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Prepositions

16.1 Introduction

Prepositions are words which combine with noun phrases to form phrases with an adverbial function, such as locative (*in the kitchen*), temporal (*on Sunday*) or manner (*with great diligence*). In English (and many other languages), prepositions precede the noun phrases they govern, but in some languages, for instance Turkish, words with a similar function follow their noun phrases (and may be called **postpositions**). In English, prepositions are often homophonous with words with a different function. For instance, *up* in *Jim climbed up the lamp post* is a preposition, and joins with *the lamp post* to form a locative phrase, but in *John used up all his money*, *up* is a joint constituent with *used* in a verb-particle construction. Likewise, *over* in *A robin flew over the lawn* is a preposition, but in *The game is over*, *over* has an independent adverbial meaning (words that can function both as adverbs and prepositions are sometimes called **adpreps**).

Prepositions are usually considered to be grammatical elements rather than full lexical items. However, in some respects they are not prototypical grammatical elements. They do largely constitute a closed set (unlike nouns and verbs), but the set has a relatively large number of members: there are 67 prepositional word forms listed in the Oxford 3000 word list (see the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Seventh Edition (2005), pp. R99–113), each with several senses. In terms of complexity of meaning, they lie somewhere between typical lexical items and typical grammatical elements. The majority carry a spatial meaning, or have a meaning which is arguably derived from a spatial one. Most temporal senses of prepositions are clearly related to spatial senses (*at three o'clock*; *at the station*) although a few are not (*during*, *since*, *until*); Several non-spatial, non-temporal prepositions have no obvious spatial origin (*as*, *concerning*, *despite*, *like*, *except*, *plus*, *than*). The discussion in this chapter will be confined mostly to prepositions whose basic meaning is spatial, although the most frequent of these are highly polysemous and have senses which extend well beyond the spatial domain.

16.2 Outline of approach

The following brief treatment of the semantics of spatial prepositions (and their extensions) takes as a basis the much more detailed account in Tyler and Evans (2003). They adopt a cognitive linguistic approach. A basic tenet of this approach is that meaning is conceptual in nature: spatial meanings, for instance, rest on spatial concepts, which in turn are derived from human experience with physical objects in space. In this section, a number of key notions to be employed in the later analyses are introduced.

16.2.1 Polysemy vs monosemy

There are basically two ways of approaching the semantic description of a linguistic element that displays a range of meanings in different contexts. One way, the **monosemic** approach, is to look for a single general meaning underlying all the variants, and to attribute the variations to local contextual effects. Typically, on this view, only the underlying general meaning is stored in long-term memory; all the variations are construed online. The alternative approach is to accept that multiple senses are individually stored in long-term memory, and that different contexts can make different selections from these. Tyler and Evans adopt the second of these approaches, arguing that in many cases there is no plausible candidate general meaning from which all the observed variants can be derived by contextual modulation alone. Of course, any selected sense will be additionally modulated by its context, and different contexts may differently modulate the same sense. In theory, a multiple sense approach could treat the individual stored senses as unrelated, i.e. as homonyms, like the two senses of *bank*. However, in the case of prepositions, Tyler and Evans maintain that all the stored meanings associated with a word are derived ultimately from a single spatial meaning by well-motivated processes of extension. The derivation is not necessarily direct: an extension can serve as the base for further extensions which cannot be derived directly from the original source meaning. The result is that all the senses of a single preposition form an interconnected set which Tyler and Evans call a 'network' (but which in most cases is a species of hierarchy). Tyler and Evans call this model of meaning the 'principled polysemy model'. It is broadly compatible with the account of polysemy presented in Chapter 5.

16.2.2 Individuating senses

The principled polysemy model requires us to be able to determine whether the different meanings of a word in different contexts are due to the selection of different senses or to contextual modulation of one and the same sense. The method Tyler and Evans use for answering this question is basically as follows. Starting from the primary sense of a word (see next section), they ask whether or

not the meaning of the word in a given context can be inferred from the primary sense taken together with features of the context. If the answer is in the negative, then the word in question in the context in question represents a different sense from the primary sense. By way of illustration, consider sentences (1), (2), and (3):

- (1) The humming bird hovered over the flower.
- (2) John nailed a board over the hole in the ceiling.
- (3) The robin flew over the lawn.

Let us assume that the primary sense of *over* in *X is over Y* involves a situation in which X is higher than Y and that this is exemplified in (1). Looking now at sentence (2), it is clear that, in the most natural interpretation, the board covers the hole, but is lower than the ceiling. Not only can this not be inferred from the meaning of *over* in (1), but it directly contradicts it. Hence we can conclude that (1) and (2) exemplify different senses of *over*. Contrast this with (1) and (3). In (3), the most natural interpretation is that the robin's flight path took him from one side of the lawn to the other, whereas (1) does not entail that the humming bird crossed from one side of the flower to the other. However both cases exemplify the basic vertical relationship signalled by *over*; furthermore, there is contextual support for the difference between (1) and (3), in that *fly* is a movement verb, whereas *hover* is not. Hence, there is a *prima facie* case that (1) and (3) exemplify the same sense of *over*, the difference being due to contextual modulation.

Tyler and Evans make only passing reference to ambiguity as a criterion for individuating senses. However, it is arguably very important. For instance, sentence (2) is ambiguous between an interpretation where the board is above the hole and one where the board is below the hole, and this gives strong support for the existence of distinct senses.

16.2.3 The primary sense in a network

In the network model proposed by Tyler and Evans, there is one sense which is primary in the sense that it is not derived by extension from any other sense in the network, whereas all the other senses in the network are derived from it, either directly or indirectly. The primary sense in a network thus has a formal relationship to the other senses in the network rather like that of the beginner in a taxonomic hierarchy to the other elements in the hierarchy (this comparison is not drawn by Tyler and Evans).

Tyler and Evans propose a number of criteria for identifying the primary sense in a network. Two will be mentioned here. The first is the earliest attested meaning of the word. If one meaning can be shown to have been active before any of the others, it is reasonable to assume, in the absence of contrary evidence, that it is the derivational source for the later meanings. Tyler and Evans claim that for prepositions with both spatial and non-spatial senses, historical evidence points to the spatial senses as being the earliest. The second criterion is what they call predominance in the semantic network. For instance, of the fifteen senses of

over identified by Tyler and Evans, eight involve X being higher than Y in X (*be*) *over* Y situations.

The search for a primary sense has obvious connections with the discussion in Chapter 12 of ways of identifying literal meaning. There it was pointed out that meaning extensions are typically unidirectional, in the sense that, given two senses A and B such that one is derived from the other, there is only one plausible direction for the derivation, and furthermore, if one of the senses is concrete and the other abstract, the direction of derivation is always from concrete to abstract. One example given was *position* (i) "location in space" and (ii) "opinion". A similar unidirectionality can be observed with prepositions (although this is not adduced as evidence by Tyler and Evans). Take, for instance, the use of *in* in (i) *in water* and (ii) *in love*. It seems highly unlikely that if *in* originally had no spatial sense, that this could have arisen by extension from its meaning in (ii).

16.2.4 Mechanisms of extension

According to Tyler and Evans, many new senses arise from closely associated experiences via pragmatic strengthening. Consider the two senses of *over* in (4) and (2) (repeated for convenience):

- (4) The picture hangs over the mantelpiece.
- (2) John nailed a board over the hole in the ceiling.

Let us accept that (4) represents the primary meaning of *over*, with the picture being higher than the mantelpiece. It is a frequent everyday experience that in a situation in which some entity X is described as being 'over' some other entity Y, not only is X understood to be higher than Y, but there is simultaneously a natural inference (an 'implicature'—see Chapter 20.1.1) that X covers Y, as in (5):

- (5) He spread the cloth over the table.

Tyler and Evans have the following to say about such cases (p. 60):

If an implicature is recurring, it can be reanalysed as distinct from the scene of which it is part. This reanalysis results in the conventionalization of the implicature as a distinct meaning component associated with the lexical form with which it is related, that is, with *over* in this case. As a consequence, *over* has, in addition to its Higher Than sense, a Covering sense associated with it. Once instantiated in semantic memory this additional sense can be employed in new contexts of use unrelated to the context that originally gave rise to it.

This means that *over* can be used to mean "covering" in cases where "higher than" does not apply, as in (2).

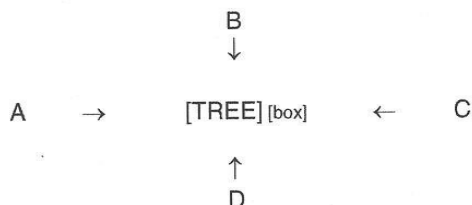
While it seems eminently plausible that the "covering" sense of *over* arises from the frequent co-occurrence of "higher than" and "covering" in everyday experience, I find Tyler and Evans's explanation of how the "covering" sense becomes detached from the "higher than" sense unenlightening. There are two possible alternative explanations. One is that separation comes about as the establishment

through repetition of an online metonymic extension. The advantage of this is that an online metonymic construal is already by its nature distinct from its literal source. Thus the derivation of the “covering” sense of *over* from the “higher than” sense may have occurred in a manner similar to the development of the distinct “type of wood” sense of *oak* (as in *This table is made of solid oak*) from the “type of tree” sense as in (*The tree at the bottom of our garden is an oak*), which is presumably the literal source.

Another possible explanation is that the derivation of the “covering” sense does not in fact depend on the frequent co-occurrence of covering and being higher than, but is due to a perceived analogy between a board covering a hole in the lawn, say, and one covering a hole in the ceiling—both involve a board oriented in a particular way with respect to a flat surface, blocking a hole. In such a scenario, the new use of *over* would not be metonymic but metaphoric, that is, due to resemblance between spatial scenes (the ceiling being interpreted as an ‘honorary horizontal’), rather than association within a single spatial scene. Something similar happens with *across*. The default interpretation of *X V’ed across Y* implies that Y is to be construed as oriented horizontally (*swim across the river*, *crawl across the railway line*, *stagger across the lawn*, and so on). However, some years ago I attended a lecture in which the speaker claimed that the complement of *across* necessarily denoted something oriented horizontally. The lecture was held in a room whose walls were covered with frescoes. In one of the walls there was a crack which began inside one of the frescoes and finished outside the fresco. I suggested that it would be perfectly natural to say that the crack *ran across the edge of the fresco*. The rest of the audience unanimously concurred. The vertical wall was granted the status of honorary horizontal. (This does not mean that speakers actually experienced the wall as horizontal: rather, they construe that relation between the crack and the wall *as if* the wall was horizontal.). Unfortunately, since the conventionalization of the “covering” sense occurred a long time ago, we are unlikely to be able to discover exactly how it happened.

16.2.5 Vantage point

Differences in the interpretation of prepositions can occur due to differences of vantage point. Consider the situation illustrated below. A, B, C, and D are observers disposed around a tree next to which is a small box:



How would the four observers describe the position of the box relative to the tree?
Most likely as follows:

- A: The box is behind the tree.
- B: The box is to the left of the tree.
- C: The box is in front of the tree.
- D: The box is to the right of the tree.

These descriptions assume that each speaker is using him/herself as vantage point in formulating the utterance. This is what speakers most usually do. However, that is not the only possibility. In neither (6) nor (7) does the speaker function as vantage point:

- (6) Follow my instructions carefully. Walk slowly towards the tree. You will find the box in front of the tree.
- (7) Tell John to follow the instructions carefully. He must walk slowly towards the tree. He will find the box in front of the tree.

16.2.6 Orientation

Many objects (in the broadest sense) have an inherent orientation in that they have a 'canonical' front and back; this is true of persons, buildings, vehicles, and so on. Other objects do not have a canonical front and back, for example a tree, a dustbin, a lamp-post. If an object *X* does not have a canonical front and back, the expression *in front of X* means "situated somewhere on an imaginary line between *X* and the relevant vantage point". However, if an object has a canonical front and back, then *in front of X* is ambiguous, and can mean either "at or near the canonical front of *X*" or "situated somewhere on an imaginary line between *X* and the relevant vantage point". So, for instance, uttered by someone situated at the side of the car in question, the sentence *The box is in front of the car* indicates two possible locations for the box, either on an imaginary line extending along the canonical direction of motion of the car, or, assuming the default vantage point, on an imaginary line between the speaker and the car. Another possible orientation, giving rise to potential ambiguity, involves the up-down dimension, which, like the front-back dimension, can be inherent or non-inherent. This can be illustrated with reference to (8) and (9):

- (8) The caterpillar crawled up Samantha's leg.
- (9) The caterpillar crawled down Samantha's leg.

The human leg has an inherent orientation, whereby "towards the hip" is *up* and "towards the foot" is *down*, and this determines the default interpretation of both (8) and (9). But suppose the caterpillar crawled from Samantha's knee to her ankle while Samantha was lying on her back with her legs in the air. In this situation, the caterpillar's trajectory could be correctly described using either (8) or (9), according to whether the prepositions *up* and *down* are construed relative to the inherent orientation of *leg*, or relative to the non-inherent orientation relative to the centre of the earth.

William James's well-known conundrum involving a squirrel on a tree is resolved by reference to inherently oriented and inherently non-oriented entities. Imagine you are walking through a wood and you spot a squirrel on a tree. As you approach the tree, the squirrel hides behind it. You then walk right round the tree, but the squirrel positions himself so that he is always on the other side of the tree to you. You have walked right round the tree, but have you walked round the squirrel? The answer is *Yes and No*—it depends what you mean by *round*. The default meaning of *walk round X* is “follow a trajectory which traces a closed figure which includes X” (a circular path is not necessary). In this sense you have certainly walked round the squirrel. But there is another interpretation based on the inherent orientation of the squirrel. On this interpretation, *walk round the squirrel* means “follow a path which takes you successively to the squirrel's inherent left, front, right, and back (in that, or the reverse order, but with any starting point)”. In that sense you have not walked round the squirrel.

16.2.7 Associated functions

Spatial prepositions often carry a meaning component in addition to their purely spatial meaning, which Tyler and Evans call an ‘associated function’. An example is the **CONTAINMENT** feature which frequently accompanies spatial uses of the preposition *in*. Take a simple example of the use of *in*: *the money in my wallet*. This denotes a spatial relationship between the money and the wallet. But there are also typical consequences of this relationship which are not purely spatial. For instance, the wallet exercises control over the movement of the money it contains: if the wallet moves, so does the money, and the wallet places constraints on the free movement of the money inside it. The wallet also constrains access to the money, which typically cannot be seen or removed unless the wallet is opened. Further examples of associated functions will be given in the next section.

16.3 Illustrative examples

This section illustrates the range of senses displayed by a small selection of prepositions. In no case is the range exhaustively covered.

16.3.1 Over

16.3.1.1 The primary sense

Tyler and Evans argue that the basic sense of *over*, from which all the other senses are directly or indirectly derived, involves one entity being in a static spatial relation to another, such that the first entity is higher than the second. They utilize Langacker's terms **trajector** (henceforward TR) and **landmark** (henceforward LM) to distinguish the two entities, and say that for *over*, the TR is higher than the LM. For present purposes, the trajector for a spatial preposition can be defined as

the entity whose location is being specified, and the landmark as the entity with respect to which the trajector is being located.

In addition to the purely spatial meaning, Tyler and Evans propose that the basic sense of *over* also includes a functional element, namely, that TR and LM are 'within one another's sphere of influence'. This includes, for instance, potential contact. Part of the evidence for this is the way *over* contrasts in certain contexts with *above*, which in spatial terms has a very similar meaning. Consider (10) and (11), from Tyler and Evans:

(10) The cross-country skier skimmed over the snow.

(11) The cross-country skier skimmed above the snow.

The most natural interpretation of (10) is that the skier was actually in contact with the snow, whereas (11) conjures up a vision of the skier magically moving without touching the snow.

Some scholars, notably Lakoff (1987), postulate a distinct "path" sense of *over* for occurrences like (12):

(12) The cat jumped over the wall.

Tyler and Evans argue at some length that there is no need for this. They claim that the "path" reading in such cases can be accounted for by (in our terms) contextual modulation of the basic sense. Briefly, they say that the construal of the notion of path in (12) arises from the verb *jump*, which, being a motion verb, entails a trajectory; *over* merely specifies that at least part of the trajectory is higher than the wall. Hence, the "path" construal of (12) requires only the basic sense of *over* together with contextual information.

The claimed evidence for the existence of a distinct "path" sense for *over* includes the occurrence of contrasts like that between (13) and (14):

(13) The girl walked on the bridge.

(14) The girl walked over the bridge.

In (13), there is no implication that the girl crossed over the bridge, whereas that is an implication of (14). Why should this contrast appear unless *over* has a "path" sense? Tyler and Evans point out that this contrast only appears with a certain type of LM: for instance, it is either absent, or very much weaker in (15) and (16):

(15) The girl walked on the lawn.

(16) The girl walked over the lawn.

They attribute the "crossing over" reading in (14) to the nature of the LM *the bridge*, which has the default function of facilitating the crossing of something. However, there are two problems with this account. The first is the absence of a "crossing over" reading in (13), which is not explained. The second is that, at least to me, (16) is ambiguous between a "crossing over" reading and a "walking about" reading. Perhaps (17) provides a clearer example of this type of ambiguity:

(17) The boy flew the kite over the lake.

This can mean either (i) that the kite remained stationary above the lake, or (ii) that it was caused to cross the lake. That this is true ambiguity is strongly suggested by the identity constraint in (18), where both John and Bill must perform the same action:

(18) John flew his kite over the lake; so did Bill with his kite.

This evidence points to the existence of a separate "path" sense of *over*. Some further derived senses of *over* are given below (the "covering" sense has already been discussed).

16.3.1.2 The "on-the-other-side-of" sense

Tyler and Evans relate a number of senses to a type of complex event, frequently encountered in everyday experience, in which a TR starts on one side of a determinate LM, follows a trajectory which passes over the LM, and ends up on the other side of the LM. The event described in (12) falls into this category. The "on-the-other-side-of-sense" is one of these. It is exemplified in (19) and (20) (from Tyler and Evans):

(19) The old town lies over the bridge.

(20) John lives over the hill.

Tyler and Evans point out that these sentences cannot be interpreted on the basis of the primary sense of *over* together with contextual information, since neither of the verbs entails a trajectory, and the TR is not in any way higher than the LM. Hence *over* in (19) and (20) must represent a sense distinct from the primary sense. One explanation of how this sense arose (although this is not Tyler and Evans's explanation) is that (say, for (19)) a virtual path from the vantage point to the old town passes over the bridge, and this provides the basis for a metonymic extension of *over*, via a PATH for END-POINT OF PATH derivation. It is worth pointing out that this type of derivation is not confined to *over*:

(21) John lives across the road.

(22) The ticket office is through the tunnel.

(23) The letter box is round the corner.

16.3.1.3 The "more than" sense

Tyler and Evans give (24) and (25) as examples of a sense which they call the 'Above-and-beyond (Excess 1) sense':

(24) Your article is over the page limit.

(25) Most students wrote over the word limit in order to provide sufficient detail.

An essential feature of this sense, according to Tyler and Evans, is the notion of "excess". They also propose a separate "more" sense, of which (26) and (27) are examples:

(26) Jerome found over forty kinds of shells on the beach.

(27) John is over fifty years of age.

This they derive from everyday experiences where "higher" implicates "greater quantity", as in, say, adding sand to a heap, or pouring water into a bottle. The frequent association between "higher than" and "greater quantity" in uses of *over* licenses the development of a separate "greater quantity" reading for *over* which can be employed in situations where the literal "higher than" of the primary sense does not apply. (Notice that for this derivation to occur, in addition to the separation, there has to be a metaphorical extension of the notion of quantity to such things as age and temperature. This point is not mentioned by Tyler and Evans.)

At this point it is legitimate to question whether Tyler and Evans's "Above-and-beyond (Excess 1)" sense and the "more" sense are genuinely distinct. The difference between (24) and (25) on the one hand, and (26) and (27) on the other, is that the notion of "excess" is absent from the latter. However, it is arguable that the presence of the notion of "excess" in (24) and (25) is due not to a separate sense, but to the presence of the word *limit* in the context. Consider sentence (28):

(28) John was driving over the speed limit.

The most frequent understanding of *limit* is "upper limit", and this is how it would most likely be understood in (24) and (25). But this is not invariably the case. Some roads, for instance, have a lower speed limit. If we interpret *limit* in (28) as "upper speed limit", then John is guilty of excessive speed; but this is not the case if the limit is a lower speed limit. In other words, the presence or absence of the feature of "excess" depends on the way the context is understood.

Strictly speaking, the above argument does not conclusively establish that there are not two independent meanings of *over*. It is still possible that manipulating the context in (28) causes a different sense to be selected. Let us suppose that this is the case, and that the senses in question are (i) "more" and (ii) "more + excess". These two senses would be in a hyponymous relation, with (i) being the more general (i.e. the hyperonym) and (ii) the more specific (i.e. the hyponym). A parallel relationship exists between *a drink* ("an imbibed liquid") and *a drink* ("an alcoholic beverage"). In this case, the distinctness of the specific sense is demonstrated by the fact that it can be negated independently of the general sense:

(29) A: Will John have a drink?

B: No, he'll just have an orange juice.

B's answer is normal because although an orange juice is a drink in the general sense, it is not a drink in the specific sense. If the specific "more + excess" sense of *over* is truly distinct, we ought to be able to demonstrate this by constructing an exchange along the lines of (29). Suppose Mary has recently bought a milk jug:

(30) A: I hear Mary has just paid over a thousand pounds for a milk jug.

B: ??No, it's a valuable antique.

It is entirely plausible that A thinks that Mary paid too much for the milk jug. If the “more + excess” reading of *over* were distinct, then it should be possible for B to deny it while not denying the “more” sense. But this seems not to be possible. The evidence therefore points to there being only one “more” sense of *over*.

16.3.1.4 The “control” sense

Tyler and Evans offer the following as examples of the “control” sense:

- (31) She has a strange power over me. (from Lakoff 1987)
- (32) Camilla has authority over purchasing.
- (33) The Prime Minister holds sway over all the important decisions.
- (34) Personality has more influence over who we marry than physical appearance.

Tyler and Evans point out, correctly, that the use of *over* in these sentences is distinct from the primary spatial sense. They derive this usage from situations in which physical control is associated with a higher position, as in the case of (35):

- (35) The fight ended with John standing over Mac, his fist raised.

Subsequently, the “control” feature becomes detached from the “higher than” feature and functions as a separate sense of *over*. Notice that *above* cannot be substituted for *over* in (31)–(34). Tyler and Evans attribute this to the functional element of the primary sense of *over* whereby TR and LM are “within one another’s sphere of influence”.

However, it is noteworthy that all the illustrative sentences given for the “control” sense contain a word denoting, or at least implying control: *power*, *authority*, *sway*, *influence*. In other words, the notion of control is clearly present in the context. Furthermore, in none of these sentences does *over* qualify as an independent semantic constituent, since it does not have contrastive value, let alone recurrent contrastive value (see Ch. 4.4.2.1). Hence, its status as a distinct sense is dubious; the most that can be claimed for it is the status like that of a ‘semantic tag’ (4.4.2.3), with only the phrases *power over*, *authority over*, *sway over*, and *influence over* being full semantic constituents. This, of course, still leaves the occurrence of the element *over* to be explained, and something on the lines of what Tyler and Evans suggest seems plausible.

16.3.2 *in*

16.3.2.1 The primary sense

The primary sense of *in*, for Tyler and Evans, like that of *over*, comprises a spatial relationship and a functional feature. The spatial relationship involves an LM which possesses an exterior, a boundary, and an interior where the TR is located:

- (36) The dog is in his kennel.
- (37) John is in the kitchen.
- (38) The key is in the box.

The functional feature is that of CONTAINMENT, which has already been mentioned. The possibilities for a contained TR of moving and/or staying still are controlled by its containing LM; access to the TR, including sensory access, from outside is constrained by the LM; the LM may afford protection to the TR, and so on. The functional feature can in some cases make a difference between two very similar spatial relationships in respect of the applicability of *in*. Vandeloise (1994: 172) gives the example of an electric light bulb and its socket, on the one hand, and a bottle and its screw cap, on the other. It is normal to say that the bulb is in its socket, but not that the bottle is in its cap. This is presumably at least partly because the socket constrains the movement possibilities of the bulb, whereas in the other case, it is rather the bottle which controls the movement of the cap.

It is not necessary for the TR to be completely surrounded by the LM for *in* to be appropriate:

- (39) the girl in the miniskirt
- (40) the fruit in the bowl
- (41) the geranium in the pot
- (42) The key is in the lock.

Tyler and Evans suggest that the use of *in* is licensed in cases of partial inclusion provided the associated function is clearly present in some form. This is arguably the case in the above examples. In (40)–(42), the LM controls the movement possibilities of the TR, and although the miniskirt in (39) does not control the girl's movement, and although it undoubtedly reveals much, it still performs an important function of restricting visual access. However, there are cases where it is difficult to uphold the functional argument. The default interpretation of (43) is that only Billy's feet were in the water.

- (43) Billy was standing in a pool of water.

Notice, however, that if Billy was sitting next to the pool with just his feet in the water, *in* would not be appropriate:

- (44) Billy was sitting in a pool of water.

We understand (43) to mean that if the boundary of the pool were projected vertically, Billy would be completely surrounded by the resulting space. This should perhaps not be regarded as a case of partial inclusion.

Tyler and Evans understand the primary sense as including two-dimensional inclusion, as in (their examples):

- (45) London is the largest city in the United Kingdom.
- (46) China is in Asia.

and being enveloped by 'prevailing atmospheric conditions':

- (47) The flag flapped in the wind.
- (48) The child shivered in the cold.

We may note here that physical inclusion can be metaphorically extended to abstract inclusion:

- (49) the character in the story
- (50) Jeremy hasn't an idea in his head.

16.3.2.2 The "state" sense

This sense is illustrated by the following:

- (51) He is in love.
- (52) The economy is in crisis.
- (53) John is in trouble.
- (54) Mary is in shock.
- (55) The sudden storm put the crew in danger.

According to Tyler and Evans, the development of this sense is motivated by the fact 'that there is a tight correlation between being located in a bounded LM and a particular state which is conferred by virtue of being so located' (p. 188). They give *She is in prison* as an example of an association between a location and a state (the state of being judicially deprived of liberty). This correlation eventually leads to *in* developing an independent "state" meaning. Tyler and Evans say that *in* 'can be employed with certain states which are conceptualised as constraining the TR or posing difficulty in leaving'. This would be a carry-over from the CONTAINMENT functional feature of the primary sense. However, although frequent, this feature does not seem to be necessary:

- (56) Her face is very beautiful in repose.

Tyler and Evans reject the sort of alternative explanation of cases like (51)–(55), according to which states, typically emotional states, are metaphorically construed as ambient fluids in which the TR is immersed, on the basis of literal usages like *in the water*, or *in the fresh air*. Yet another approach (see, for example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980: ch. 7) proposes that in cases like (51)–(55) states are metaphorically construed as containers.

16.3.2.3 The "activity" sense

This sense is illustrated by the following:

- (57) Pierre is in the Civil Service.
- (58) Lisette is in property management.

For Tyler and Evans, the motivation for this sense is similar to that for the "state" sense, namely, the close correlation in experience between activities and the locations in which they are carried out, and the subsequent development of the independent "activity" sense for *in*.

16.3.2.4 The “means” sense

Tyler and Evans’s examples of this sense are as follows:

- (59) She wrote in ink.
- (60) He spoke in Italian.

They suggest that the development of this sense depended on the prior establishment of the “activity” sense, and results from a close correlation between activities and the means by which they are accomplished.

16.3.2.5 The “shape as boundary” sense

This is the last of Tyler and Evans’s proposed senses for *in* that we shall consider here (although it by no means exhausts the senses they recognize). It is illustrated by (61) and (62) (from Tyler and Evans):

- (61) OK, class, put your chairs in a circle.
- (62) If fire breaks out get in single file before leaving.

To quote Tyler and Evans:

We suggest that since a salient aspect of a bounded LM is its boundary, the use of *in* to relate a TR and a bounded LM thereby highlights a salient aspect of bounded LMs. Through pragmatic strengthening *in* has derived a Shape As Boundary Sense. (pp. 196–7)

There is another possible explanation for (61) and (62) which does not require a separate sense of *in*. It is true that (61), for example, is ambiguous, between “put your chairs to form a circle” and, say, “draw a circle and put your chairs in it” (this is not to deny that the former is the more frequent usage). This might seem to give support to the existence of an independent “shape as boundary” sense. However, the primary sense of *in* is not confined to three dimensions:

- (63) There is a break in the line John drew. (one dimension)
- (64) Draw a circle and then draw a pussy cat in it. (two dimensions)
- (65) Put the pencils in the box. (three dimensions)

This being so, the ambiguity of (61) can be explained without invoking different senses of *in*, but in terms of different senses of *circle*, as either (i) a one-dimensional line (the most frequent construal of (61)) or (ii) a two-dimensional area (the less frequent construal).

16.3.3 *to***16.3.3.1** The primary sense

According to Tyler and Evans, in its primary sense, *to* denotes a spatial relationship in which a TR is directed towards a highlighted LM, either by virtue of its motion:

- (66) John is on his way to the supermarket.
- (67) The ball rolled to the fence.

or by virtue of its inherent orientation:

- (68) The Gormley statues on the beach at Crosby all face to the west.
- (69) The sign points to the cemetery.

When the TR is animate and in motion, the LM is typically interpreted with the associated function of "goal".

Tyler and Evans draw attention to a contrast between *to* and *for* in certain contexts:

- (70) He ran to the hills.
- (71) He ran for the hills.

They suggest that the contrast lies in the fact that in (70) the hills are presented as the 'primary goal' of the running, whereas in (71) they are presented as an 'oblique goal', that is to say:

... *for* appears to relate the TR to an ulterior purpose, contingent on reaching a particular LM. (p.146)

However, a number of points are worth mentioning. First, while an ulterior purpose may be more salient in (71) than in (70), it is not entirely absent from (70), and in the default interpretation of (72), say, it is just as salient as in (71):

- (72) He went to the supermarket.

Second, the contrast illustrated in (70) and (71) is of rather restricted occurrence:

- (73) He *walked/?cycled/?rode/?drove/*flew/*went for the hills.
- (74) He ran for ??the supermarket/??for the other side of the road.

Finally, a more reliable contrast is that (70) implicates arrival, whereas (71) does not:

- (75) *He ran to the hills but failed to reach them.
- (76) He ran for the hills but failed to reach them.

16.3.3.2 The "locational" sense

This sense differs from the primary sense in that neither motion nor orientation is involved:

- (77) Bolton lies to the north of Manchester.
- (78) The boarders lived in the rooms to the back of the house. (from Tyler and Evans)

16.3.3.3 The "contact" sense

This sense is exemplified in the following (from Tyler and Evans):

- (79) The poster portrayed a young woman with her finger to her lips.
- (80) Apply the soap directly to the stain for the best results.

The essential feature of this sense is contact between the TR and the LM.

16.3.3.4 The “attachment” sense

Sentences (81) and (82) contain examples of this sense (from Tyler and Evans):

- (81) He added a fence to the garden.
 (82) Chris and Katherine are married to each other.

There are reasons to doubt whether the occurrences of *to* in 16.3.3.1–16.3.3.4 represent truly independent senses of *to*. First, in many of the above sentences, *to* is not an independent semantic constituent. This is true, for instance, of *to* in *apply X to Y* (80), *add X to Y* (81), and *be married to* (82). Second, in other cases, the default construal of *to* is predictable from a general sense—something like “TR is located with respect to LM”, together with contextual information, including general knowledge. For instance, what could (77) possibly mean, other than that to get from Manchester to Bolton one must travel north? Tyler and Evans argue that a simple locational reading for *to* in (79) would not allow us to conclude that the woman’s finger touched her lips, so the “contact” sense must be distinct. However, the gesture is a familiar conventional one (which to me does not require actual contact), which is enough for it to be the default interpretation of the sentence without requiring a separate sense.

16.3.3.5 The “comparison” sense

Tyler and Evans’s examples of this sense are:

- (83) The design of this sweater is inferior to that one.
 (84) The motion was carried by 50 votes to 29.

Once again, the problem arises of whether *to* is an independent semantic constituent. For instance, in *X is inferior to Y*, *to* is not substitutable, therefore has no contrastive value. Of course, the historical question of why the particle is *to* rather than something else, is a valid one, but it does not necessarily have synchronic relevance. In the present instance, the semanticity of *to* would seem to be rather low, and describing it as a ‘sense’ is misleading.

16.3.4 *through***16.3.4.1** The primary sense

The spatial relation described by *through*, according to Tyler and Evans, involves two elements, first, a bounded LM (that is, one with an inside, an outside, and a boundary), and second, an entry point, an exit point, and a continuous series of points connecting entry point and exit point. This evokes an associated functional feature of PATH. Sentences (85) and (86) are prototypical examples:

- (85) John crawled through the tunnel.
 (86) Mary drove a nail through the thick plank.

A remark on p. 220 makes it clear that they have in mind a three-dimensional LM, but (87) seems to be well-formed with only two dimensions:

(87) Draw a circle, then draw a line through the circle.

In some cases, *through* is used with LMs which are not bounded, and are not construed in terms of entry and exit points:

(88) We watched the huge fish gliding through the water.

(89) It's the motion of the aircraft through the air that provides the force that prevents it falling to the ground.

In other cases, the LM does not seem to be construed as having an interior, which makes the entry and exit points fall together:

(90) She poked the needle through the thin plastic film.

These facts suggest that Tyler and Evans's characterization of the primary sense of *through* can be usefully regarded as the prototype of a category of cases which also includes fewer central cases where one or more prototype features are absent (three dimensions in (87), a boundary in (88) and (89), and an interior in (90)).

16.3.4.2 The "extended action" sense

Tyler and Evans's example of this sense is (91):

(91) Mary worked through the pages of math exercises.

The evidence that this is a distinct sense is that the default interpretation of (91) contrasts with an (unlikely but possible) interpretation involving the primary sense, in which Mary somehow physically traverses the pages, perhaps through holes. (It is not in dispute that (91) is ambiguous in this way. However, strictly speaking, this is not conclusive evidence that the ambiguity is attributable to two senses of *through*. This is because the context does not remain constant across the two readings. For instance, the interpretation of *page* switches from the TEXT facet to the TOME facet (see Chapter 5.5.1), and two different readings of *worked* are involved.) Tyler and Evans explain the development of this sense in terms of the correlation in experience between motion along a path and purposeful activity, leading eventually to *through* signalling "purposeful activity" in the absence of "motion along a path". It is not clear from this explanation why only *through* should have acquired this sense, and none of the other prepositions whose primary sense has "path" as a strongly associated functional feature, such as *along*, *across*, or *past*. Tyler and Evans in general reject the metaphor approach to the development of additional senses, but surely the reason that *through* is favoured for this sense is that it is easier to metaphorically map a mass of material substance that has to be traversed onto a set of mental exercises to be completed.

16.3.4.3 The “other side of” sense

This sense is exemplified by (21), repeated here for convenience, and the remarks concerning the parallel sense of *over* apply equally here:

(21) The ticket office is through the tunnel.

16.3.4.4 The “means”: sense

Tyler and Evans’s illustrative examples of this sense are (92) and (93):

(92) The conference was funded through the miscellaneous budget.

(93) I get my coffee through an online retailer.

It is clear enough that *through* in (92) and (93) does not have its primary sense. Tyler and Evans explain the meaning as follows (p. 226):

In these sentences a particular outcome (i.e. conference funding, and obtaining coffee) is facilitated by a particular LM (the miscellaneous budget, and an on-line retailer). These LMs provide the means whereby the outcome is achieved.

They also point out that *via* can be substituted for *through* without a significant change of meaning. This meaning arises, according to Tyler and Evans, from the close association in experience between paths and means of achieving particular goals.

16.3.4.5 The “cause” sense

The following are cited by Tyler and Evans as examples of this sense (attributed to Hilferty (1999)):

(94) The accused murderer’s wife was able to remain loyal through her conviction of his innocence.

(95) The milk went sour through a lack of proper refrigeration.

(96) Computer technology has evolved through constant research.

When *through* has the “cause” sense, it can be substituted by *because of*, but not by *via*; conversely, the “means” sense can be substituted by *via*, but not by *because of*:

(97) The accused murderer’s wife was able to remain loyal because of/*via her conviction of his innocence.

(98) I get my coffee via/*because of an online retailer.

Not all occurrences of *because of* can be paraphrased by *through*:

(99) The fish died because of/*through pollution. (after Hilferty)

(100) We were unable to travel because of/*through the floods.

Tyler and Evans accept Hilferty’s explanation for the impossibility of *through* in (99), namely, that it is:

...because pollution denotes the by-product of a particular contaminating activity, not the activity which directly affected the environment. (Tyler and Evans p. 227)

This is rather unconvincing. Firstly, although pollution is a by-product of some other activity, it is nonetheless the direct cause of the death of the fish. Secondly, the direct cause of the milk going sour in (95) is not the lack of refrigeration, but bacterial activity, yet *through* is acceptable. Thirdly, the explanation does not apply to (100). The constraint on the use of *through* in the “cause” sense therefore remains mysterious.

16.3.4.6 The “transmission” sense

Again following Hilferty, Tyler and Evans propose a “transmission” sense of *through*, exemplified in (101)–(104):

- (101) HIV can be transmitted through sexual intercourse.
- (102) He received a package through the mail.
- (103) The medium received a strange premonition through the ether.
- (104) Max gets his blue eyes through his mother.

What these examples have in common, according to Tyler and Evans, is that the LMs ‘serve to transmit a particular entity’ (p. 225). However, a critical examination casts doubt on the existence of a distinct “transmission” sense, at least as Tyler and Evans present it. Let us first eliminate (103) from the discussion, as it falls easily under the primary sense, with the premonition moving through the ether much as a fish moves through water. What needs to be established is that the “transmission” sense is distinct from the “means” sense. Two facts throw doubt on this claim. First, in (101), (102), and (104), *through* can be paraphrased by *via*, a test that Tyler and Evans used as evidence for the distinctness of the “means” and the “cause” sense. Second, (92) and (93) can be viewed as involving transmission. In (92), the funding presumably does not originate in the miscellaneous budget, but comes from somewhere else (the government, or an endowment, say), and is passed on via the miscellaneous budget. And in (93), the retailer is presumably not a coffee producer, but an intermediary, who transmits the coffee to the customer. There is also a possibility of interpreting (101) as an example of the “cause” sense, rather than a “transmission” sense. Notice that *through* in (101), but not in (102), can be paraphrased by *as a result of*:

- (105) HIV can be transmitted as a result of sexual intercourse.
- (106) *He received a package as a result of the mail.

These last three proposed senses of *through*—“transmission”, “means”, and “cause”—illustrate the difficulties analysts often face in establishing distinct senses of grammatical items. In this case, there is an equally plausible alternative grouping of the example sentences offered by Tyler and Evans, under just two headings:

A: "transmission route" (*through* is paraphrasable by *via*, but not by *as a result of* or *because of*:

(92), (93), (102), (104)

B: "cause"

(95), (96), (97), (99), (100), (105).

To these we might add (107):

(107) John developed his muscles through constant exercise.

There might be some grounds for distinguishing an "intended consequence" sense, which can be paraphrasable by *by means of*, and an "unintended consequence" sense which can be paraphrased by *as a result of*, because of the ambiguity of (108):

(108) John developed calluses on his finger tips through practising the classical guitar.

This might be taken as intentional on John's part, like (107), because one needs to have calluses on one's finger tips to play the classical guitar properly. On the other hand, (108) could be interpreted on the lines of (109), where the red mark has no function:

(109) Mary developed a red mark under her chin through playing the violin.

However, it is difficult to prove that the ambiguity in (108) is attributable to two senses of *through*, rather than to contextual factors.

16.4 Space and time

A large number of temporal uses of prepositions are clearly related to particular spatial construals of the same lexical form. With a few possible exceptions, it is generally accepted on historical and developmental grounds that in such cases the spatial uses are primary.

Most temporal uses of prepositions involve construing time as a line on which points can be located. The line usually has a direction, with the future ahead of the TR and the past behind. The passage of time is construed as motion towards the future of the TR relative to the LM, with either the TR construed as stationary and the LM moving (*The deadline is approaching*) or the reverse (*We are approaching the deadline*). The following illustrate this type of usage.

(110) The train leaves at three o'clock.

(cf. John is at the head of the queue.)

(111) You'll be glad that interview is behind you.

(cf. Look out, Cecil is just behind you.)

(112) She'll arrive some time between two o'clock and three.

(cf. Jane is sitting between Sam and Cheryl.)

- (113) He works from nine to five.
(cf. There's a crack in the wall running from the corner of the upstairs window to the middle of the door lintel.)
- (114) It's past bedtime for you, my lad.
(cf. The post office is on Belmont Street, just past the baker's.)
- (115) I can do it easily in an hour.
(cf. There's a gap in the fence: unidimensional use of 'in')

In some cases there is, strictly speaking, no precise spatial model, but there are sufficient points of resemblance to make the derivation intelligible. Take the case of (116):

- (116) The party went on all through the night.

There do not appear to be any one-dimensional LMs in spatial uses of *through*, but *the night* can be construed as a bounded LM with an exterior, entry and exit points, and an extended interior. Similarly, there are no one-dimensional spatial uses of *over*, but temporal co-extent can be related to the "covering" sense:

- (117) They stayed over the weekend.

The case of *before* is slightly different to the examples considered so far. Originally this was a spatial preposition, meaning "in front of". Used in this sense nowadays, it has a somewhat archaic flavour:

- (118) The merchant prostrated himself before the king.

In its temporal use it is of course perfectly normal:

- (119) Make sure you are home before midnight.

However, *before* has in addition a normal spatial use which is arguably based on the temporal use:

- (120) A: Can you tell me where the post office is?
B: Yes, it's about a mile down the road, just before the traffic lights.

In some cases, time is construed as a quantity, of which there can be more or less. This is the case in (120) and (121), where the interpretation of *over* and *under* are clearly related to their "more than" and "less than" senses, respectively:

- (121) It took me over two hours to get to work.
(122) I bet I can get there and back in under an hour.

This brings to a close our brief excursion into the semantics of prepositions. The discussion has centred on the cognitive linguistic approach, but even with this constraint, there is considerable room for differences of opinion. With further research, we can anticipate greater clarification of the field.

Discussion questions and exercises

How many distinct senses of *round* are exemplified in the following sentences? Which sense is the primary one? (NB: There is room for more than one opinion.) The list is not intended to be exhaustive of the possible senses of *round*.

1. We walked round the exhibition in the main hall.
2. We drove round the abandoned lorry.
3. He talked round the subject, but never really got to the point.
4. They were sitting round the table.
5. The tourists wandered round Trafalgar Square.
6. The toys were lying all round the room.
7. The demonstrators marched round Trafalgar Square.
8. John lives round the corner from Mary.
9. There's a fence round the garden.
10. The judges were stationed at strategic points round the race track.
11. The demonstrators marched round Nelson's Column.
12. We managed to get round their objections.
13. The chairs were arranged round the room.
14. We ran ten times round the race track.
15. Mary looked round the room.

Suggestions for further reading

The preposition *over* has attracted a good deal of attention. Readers interested in pursuing this topic further should read the account in Lakoff (1987: 416–61) alongside Tyler and Evans's account. See also Dewell (1994). Vandeloise (1994) provides an in-depth analysis of *in*. For more general treatments of spatial prepositions see Vandeloise (1991), Lindstromberg (1998), and O'Dowd (1998).

CHAPTER 17

Derivational affixes

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Derivational affixes

17.1 Affixes

An affix is a grammatical element (closed-set item) that is an integral part of a word, but is not the main meaning-bearing part (known as the **root**). The *-ed* of *walked* and the *dis-* of *dislike* are examples of affixes, *walk* and *like* being their respective roots. There are two important types of affix, known as **inflectional affixes** and **derivational affixes**. Both types can carry meaning. Each affix is attached to a **stem**, which may be a root, but can also itself be complex with one or more affixes. For instance, the stem for the affix *-ism* in *antidisestablishmentarianism* is *antidisestablishmentarian-* (of which the root is *establish*).

Typical examples of inflectional affixes in English are: the *-ed* and the *-s* of *waited* and *waits*; the *-en* of *eaten*; the *-s* of *dogs*; the *-er* of *shorter*. Inflectional affixes do not play a part in determining which **lexeme** a word represents, and differently inflected forms do not have separate entries in dictionaries. Inflectional affixes never function to change the grammatical category of a word. Inflectional affixes constitute the outermost layer of structure of a complex word: those who are against the disestablishment of the Church of England are called *antidisestablishmentarians*, with the inflectional affix *-s* being the last affix to be added as the word is built up from the root.

Typical examples of derivational affixes are: the *dis-* of *disapprove*; the *de-* of *defrost*; the *-ment* of *development*; the *-ize* of *nationalize*; the *-ish* of *yellowish*. Unlike inflectional affixes, the derivational variety do create new lexemes which are listed separately in dictionaries. They frequently function to change the grammatical category of a word, as in the case of the *-ment* of *development*.

Inflectional affixes are typically very regular and apply across large word classes. Their meanings therefore have to be of a very 'thin' sort that is compatible with a wide range of root meanings. Derivational affixes are much more idiosyncratic, and, as a result, their meanings can be more specific.

Derivational affixes come in two varieties, those which alter the syntactic properties of the stem, like *-er*, as in *drive/driver* (**class-changing affixes**), and those like *re-* as in *paint/repaint* which do not change the syntactic category of the

stem (**class-maintaining affixes**). A complete account of affixation (even in English) is not possible here, but examples of the main types are given below.

17.2 Class-changing derivational affixes

17.2.1 Noun-forming: *-er*

The noun-forming suffix *-er* creates nouns of a wide variety of semantic types. The following list is adapted from Lieber (2004: 17) (it is not claimed here that this list covers all the possibilities, nor that all words bearing the *-er* suffix can be easily assigned to one of the categories):

AGENT:	<i>writer, driver, thinker</i>
INSTRUMENT:	<i>computer, printer, pager</i>
EXPERIENCER:	<i>hearer, viewer, sufferer</i>
STIMULUS:	<i>soother, thriller, shocker</i>
PATIENT/THEME:	<i>fryer</i> ("for frying", e.g. chicken), <i>(good-)looker</i>
DENOMINAL NOUN:	<i>Londoner, villager, forester</i>
MEASURE:	<i>fiver, tenner, six-footer</i>
LOCATION:	<i>diner, boozier, smoker</i>

The existence of such a variety of semantic effects raises the question of how many distinct meanings the affix has, and whether we are dealing with polysemy or homonymy. This is often difficult to decide with grammatical elements, especially when the different semantic effects vary with the semantic nature of the stems to which they are attached, as is the case with many prepositions and their complements, and, for instance, the 'uses' of the progressive form in English. However, clear cases of ambiguity provide strong evidence for distinct senses:

<i>printer</i> :	AGENT VS INSTRUMENT
<i>viewer</i> :	EXPERIENCER VS INSTRUMENT
<i>fryer</i> :	PATIENT/THEME VS AGENT
<i>diner</i> :	AGENT VS LOCATION

According to the position on polysemy adopted in Chapter 5, this would suggest that *-er* has at least five distinct senses:

AGENT, INSTRUMENT, EXPERIENCER, PATIENT/THEME, LOCATION

That leaves STIMULUS, DENOMINAL NOUN, and MEASURE unaccounted for. It may be possible to separate MEASURE and LOCATION by means of ambiguity. Take the case of *forty-niner*. Where does this fit? A plausible suggestion is that it is a kind of location, but in time rather than in space. But it is not totally implausible that it could denote someone in charge of forty-nine persons, on the analogy of a *sixer* in the Scouts/Guides. We can therefore add MEASURE to the above list. Intuitively, the

examples of *STIMULUS* seem close to *INSTRUMENTS*, the difference being attributable to the meanings of the stems. *DENOMINAL NOUNS*, on the other hand, are arguably distinct, even if there is no proof of potential ambiguity. But there is a possibility that there are distinct meanings within this category. For instance, someone who was born in, say, Newcastle, but has lived in London for many years, can truthfully both deny and affirm that they are a Londoner. And *forester* can similarly alternate between a forest dweller, and someone who works in forestry. That suggests at least three meanings for *N-er*: "born in N", "lives in N", "works in N".

This line of reasoning is anathema to many linguists, who devote a great deal of effort (and ingenuity) to discovering a single underlying meaning which will account for all the different uses. Lieber is one of these. Her analysis of the semantic content of *-er* (and *-ee*, *-ist*, and *-ant/ent*) is that it creates nouns that possess the features *+MATERIAL* (i.e. that they are concrete nouns) and *DYNAMIC*. The feature *DYNAMIC* has two values, *+DYNAMIC*, which refers to actions and processes, and *-DYNAMIC*, which refers to states. There are some problems in applying these features, not discussed by Lieber. First, it is not clear in what sense, say, a story, which can be a thriller or shocker, is *+MATERIAL*. Another example is the linguistic term *intensifier*, which applies to words like *very*, *rather*, and so on. Are words concrete? There are also problems with the feature *DYNAMIC*. Lieber claims that for many words, the feature is irrelevant and therefore does not form part of their semantic specification. Hence the noun *chair*, for instance, is not specified for *+/-DYNAMIC*. However, it is difficult to see why *chair* ("place for sitting") is not specified for *DYNAMIC*, whereas *diner* ("place for eating") is. The distinction seems somewhat arbitrary.

Even if we accept the feature specifications, and even if we accept that all examples of *-er* (and its sisters) possess the claimed features, there is still a problem about what, precisely, this tells us. The fact that two distinguishable readings of a linguistic element have features in common is no guarantee that it is legitimate to claim that they have a unitary specification. If it was, we would be able to say that *bank* was monosemic because the two readings "river bank" and "money bank" share the feature *LOCATION*. What is needed for a definitive diagnosis of unitary status is (a) the existence of a reading in which the putative contrast is neutralized, and (b) the impossibility of ambiguity. Conversely, true polysemy requires (a) the impossibility of a neutralized reading and (b) the possibility of ambiguity. On this view, *-er* is polysemous. Intuitively, *AGENT*, *INSTRUMENT*, *EXPERIENCER*, *STIMULUS*, and *PATIENT/THEME* are related and would therefore count as polysemous senses of *-er*; however, the sense of relatedness is much weaker for the other readings.

17.2.2 Verb-forming: *-ise/ize*

The suffix *-ise/ize* can be added to a range of nouns and adjectives to form verbs (*-ify* has a very similar effect):

unionize, civilianize, epitomize, carbonize, crystallize, texturize, apologize, summarize, hospitalize, criticize, philosophize, etc.

The following principal meaning classes can be distinguished (the glosses have to be interpreted very generously):

- (i) "X causes Y to become Z" (here and in the following examples Z represents the meaning of the noun or adjective stem):
X randomizes Y: "X causes Y to become **random**"
 (also: *civilianize, regularize, Europeanize*)
- (ii) "X changes to Z"/"X becomes Z":
X solidifies: "X changes into a **solid**"/"X becomes **solid**"
 (also: *crystallize, acidify, liquefy*)
- (iii) "X causes Y to have Z"/"X transfers Z to Y":
X apologizes to Y: "X causes Y to have an **apology**"
 (also: *anaesthetize, texturize, rubberize, glorify*)
- (iv) "X causes Y to go to Z"/"X transfers Y to Z":
X hospitalizes Y: "X causes Y to go to **hospital**"
 (also: *containerize, institutionalize, computerize*)
- (v) "X does Z":
X philosophizes: "X does **philosophy**"
 (also: *anthropologize, botanize, speechify*)

Types (i) and (ii) exemplify the familiar causative/inchoative alternation observable in *John opened the door/The door opened*, and are thus intuitively closely related: *John liquefied the substance/The substance liquefied* (not all verbs have both readings). Types (iii) and (iv) are also closely related—they both involve transfer, but differ in whether Z is the item transferred ((iii)) or the destination of the transfer ((iv)). All of (i)–(iv) involve change and can be regarded as polysemous variants. Type (v), on the other hand, is more difficult to relate to the others, and is perhaps better regarded as a homonymous reading.

17.2.3 Adjective-forming: *-able*

The suffix *-able* attaches most frequently to verbs, but occasionally to nouns, to form adjectives. Four major types of semantic effect can be recognized; within the first type a number of more subtle distinctions can be made.

A. "Can be V-ed":

lockable, adjustable

The following more subtle distinctions can be made within this heading:

- (i) "Can be V-ed without undesirable consequences":
drinkable, washable

Petrol can be drunk, but would not be described as drinkable. Similarly, something whose colour was not fast could be washed, but would not be described as washable.

- (ii) "Can be V-ed by persons with relevant properties":

affordable, manageable

Affordability is not an inherent property of anything, but is relative to the means of a particular prospective purchaser.

- (iii) "Can be V-ed with pleasure or profit":

kissable, collectable, watchable, readable

- (iv) "Fit to be V-ed":

passable, employable, publishable

- (v) "Liable to be V-ed to a salient degree":

excitable, noticeable

Some ambiguity can be observed within this set. For instance, *readable* may mean either "can be deciphered" or "easy/enjoyable to read"; similarly, *drinkable* may mean simply "poses no health risk" or "enjoyable to drink/worth drinking".

- B. "Of a nature to provoke V-ing":

pitiable, enjoyable, admirable, fanciable, likeable, believable

A 'passive' gloss of these does not seem adequate. The verb in all these cases is one whose arguments are EXPERIENCER and THEME.

- C. "Can V":

adaptable, changeable, suitable

When applied to an object, *adaptable* has a straightforward passive meaning, but when applied to a person, it means "readily adapts". The underlying verbs are neither active nor passive, but rather middle.

- D. "Provides or possesses a salient degree of N":

comfortable, valuable

In this type, the suffix is arguably attached to a noun rather than a verb.

17.3 Class-maintaining affixes

17.3.1 Nominal: diminutives and augmentatives

English does not make great use of diminutive or augmentative affixes, and what there are are mostly not very productive. Examples of diminutive affixes with a clear independent meaning are:

-let: *owlet, notelet, booklet, starlet*

-ette: *kitchenette, cigarette*

-ling: *duckling, gosling, codling*

The most productive example is probably the prefix *mini-*:

mini-skirt, mini-computer, mini-break, minigolf

These affixes all add the propositional meaning “small”, or a fairly transparent derived meaning such as “young” or “minor”, but little in the way of expressive meaning. The exception is *-y/-ie*:

doggy, pussy, birdie, daddy, girlie, laddie

These are common in speech to young children, where they add expressive meaning of affection towards both referent and addressee. When used in connection with adults, they can express condescension or even contempt:

(I) Now you listen to me, laddie.

English has a few augmentative prefixes:

mega-: *mega-store, mega-star*

hyper-: *hyper-market, hyper-inflation*

maxi-: *maxi-skirt*

Like the typical English diminutives, these carry little or no expressive meaning.

Some languages have a much greater range of productive diminutives and to a lesser extent, augmentatives. But these affixes typically play a much greater expressive role than their equivalents in English (their role in politeness can also be important: see Chapter 20). Spanish and Italian provide examples. Italian grammars traditionally distinguish four semantic functions for noun suffixes: diminutivi (diminutives), accrescitivi (augmentatives), vezzeggiativi (amelioratives), and peggiorativi (pejoratives), which Lepschy and Lepschy (1988: 177) gloss as “small”, “large”, “nice”, and “nasty”, respectively. However, as we have seen with affixes already examined, it is not possible to assign particular affixes uniquely to any of these functions—everything depends on the meaning of the stem and on context. A full treatment of these is not possible here: what follows is purely illustrative.

Diminutives:

Italian: *paese* (“village”)/*paesello* (“little village”); *fiume* (“river”)/*fiumicello* (“stream”); *libro* (“book”)/*libretto* (“little book”); *uomo* (“man”)/*ometto* (“little man”); *orso* (“bear”)/*orsacchiotto* (“bear cub”); *topo* (“mouse”)/*topolino* (“little mouse”)

Spanish: *chica* (“girl”)/*chiquita* (“little girl”); *calle* (“street”)/*callejuela* (“alleyway”); *montón* (“pile”)/*montoncito* (“little pile”)

Augmentatives:

Italian: *uomo* (“man”)/*omone* (“big man”); *libro* (“book”)/*librone* (“big book”)

Spanish: *mujer* (“woman”)/*mujerona* (“big woman”); *coche* (“car”)/*cochazo* (“big car”); *muchacho* (“boy”)/*muchachote* (“big boy”)

Pejoratives:

Italian: *uomo* ("man")/*omaccio* ("nasty man"); *libro* ("book")/*libraccio* ("dreadful, obscene book"); *tempo* ("weather")/*tempaccio* ("bad weather"); *giovane* ("young person")/*giovinaastro* ("young lout")

Spanish: *palabra* ("word")/*palabrote* ("swear word"); *casa* ("house")/*casucha* ("house in bad state of repair"); *perro* ("dog")/*perrazo* ("big, dangerous dog")

Vezzeggiativi ('amelioratives'):

Italian: *posto* ("place")/*posticino* ("nice little place"); *bocca* ("mouth")/*boccuccia* ("sweet little mouth"); *figlio* ("son")/*figliolo* ("dear boy")

17.3.2 Verbal: *re-*

Lieber says that the semantic effect of prefixing a verb stem with *re-* is to induce an interpretation whereby the action denoted by the unprefixated stem is repeated (*re-build*; *re-freeze*). She further points out that not all verbs can be prefixed by *re-* (**re-eat*, **re-yawn*, **re-push*) and suggests that those that can are by and large those that can be made reversible by prefixation by *un-* (*unload/re-load*; *undo/re-do*). (One might also wish to include examples with *dis-* (*mount/dismount/re-mount*; *infect/disinfect/re-infect*). However, a close examination of verbs prefixed by *re-* suggests that neither claim is wholly accurate.

Let us first examine Lieber's view that '*re-* induces an iteration of the action denoted by the verb' (2004: 147). Consider the case of an astronaut on his first space trip. At the end of his mission he re-enters the earth's atmosphere before touching down safely. The use of *re-enter* seems perfectly natural here, in spite of the fact that the astronaut is entering the atmosphere for the first time. What is recurring here is not the action of entering, but the resultant state of entering. In other words, the astronaut is once again *in* the atmosphere. Many verbs behave like *re-enter* in this respect. What they have in common is that they denote a change of state (including location), and it is the recurrence of the resultant state which justifies the *re-*. For instance, one can freeze some water, then *re-melt* it without having previously melted it; if someone's face is badly damaged in an accident, a cosmetic surgeon can *re-build* it; in theory one could *re-embark* on a ship without a previous embarkation if one had been born on board and had just disembarked for the first time. The semantic effect of *re-* is very similar to that of *again*:

- (2) Mary entered the room, but came out again straight away.

Interestingly, one can make a distinction between repetition of the resultant state and repetition of the action by means of stress:

- (3) I filled the pan with water then emptied it again. (unstressed: first-time interpretation preferred)
 (4) I filled the pan with water then emptied it **again**. (stressed: first-time interpretation impossible)

It is perhaps possible to see the same effect with *re-*:

- (5) The spaceship first entered the atmosphere at the wrong angle, so they had to go back and **re-enter**.

Let us now look at Lieber's suggestion that it is reversible verbs that can be prefixed with *re-*, that is, verbs that denote a transition between two states. We may note in passing that this generalization seems to hold fairly well for verbs that allow the "first-time" interpretation of *re-*. But that does not cover cases like the following:

- (6) Mary re-read the letter.
 (7) The committee re-examined the evidence.
 (8) The panel re-auditioned the singer.
 (9) The jury were asked to reconsider their verdict.

Notice, first, that these verbs do not denote a transition between two states, and second, they do not allow a first-time reading. The puzzle here is why *read*, *examine*, and *audition* can be prefixed with *re-*, but other verbs that do not denote a transition between two states, such as *see*, or *hear*, cannot:

- (10) *We were hoping to re-see the fox.
 (11) *James claims he re-heard the cuckoo.

There is perhaps a clue to what differentiates the two types of verb in the relative normality of the following:

- (12) *We enjoyed the film so much that we re-watched it.
 (13) ?We failed to spot the faked accident on the first viewing of the film, so we re-watched it.

All the 'prefixable' verbs seem to denote the exercise of reason, judgement, or focused concentration.

One further puzzle about prefixing with *re-*: why is it that in *Mary re-read the letter*, Mary has to have done the first reading, whereas in *Mary re-painted the door*, the first painting may well have been done by someone else? It seems that all we can say about the meaning of *re-* is that in all cases it involves some sort of recurrence, the details depending in only partially understood ways on the meaning of the stem. (This is not the same as saying that it has a single unitary meaning.)

17.3.3 Adjectival: *-ish*

The only class-maintaining affix for adjectives in English, apart from the negative prefixes, which are dealt with in the next section, is the suffix *-ish*. When this occurs with numbers, it means "approximately":

- (14) A: How old is she?
 B: Oh, fifty-ish.

But with adjectives it has a weakening effect:

- (15) There was a greenish stain on the shirt.

This does not mean “approximately green” (i.e. a blue-green, or a yellow-green), but “faintly or weakly green”. Similarly with *bluish*, *reddish*, *yellowish*, *blackish*, *whitish*, *pinkish*, *greyish*, *brownish*, and *purplish*. The only basic colour that is not happy with *-ish* is *orange* (presumably for phonological reasons, but perhaps *orangey* fulfils the same function). This suffix does not occur with secondary colours: **rose-ish*, **puce-ish*, **violetish*, **navy-ish*. With dimensional adjectives *-ish* gives the idea of “slightly”: *tallish*, *smallish*, *narrowish*, *slowish*. Notice that scalar adjectives denoting an extreme value do not accept *-ish*: **huge-ish*, **tiny-ish*, and *warmish* is more felicitous than *?hottish*, and *coolish* than *?coldish*. Scalar adjectives that denote properties not usually measured in conventional units often resist *-ish*: *??hardish*, *??strongish*, *??cleverish*. In the case of polar antonyms, there seems to be a tendency for the negative partner to be marginally happier with *-ish* than the positive partner:

Compare *strongish/weakish*, *fastish/slowish*, *hardish/softish*, *wideish/narrowish*, *deepish/shallowish*. Similarly, absolute adjectives resist *ish*:

(16) **He looks deadish.*

(17) **The door was openish.*

17.4 Negative affixation

In English, negative affixes may be prefixes (unhappy, immoral, disobey, non-EU) or, less commonly, suffixes (fat-free, boneless). Prefixes attach most frequently to adjectival stems (impossible, irreversible), followed by verbal stems (dismount, deactivate) and much less frequently, nominal stems (disarray, incomprehension, defrost). A negative affix may have any of a variety of semantic effects. In a significant number of cases, the effect can be at least partly predicted from the semantic properties of the stem to which it is attached.

17.4.1 Logical negation

Logical negation can usually be recognized by means of the ‘It-is-not-the-case-that’ test. For instance, *im-* in *impossible* produces logical negation because *It is impossible* has the same truth conditions as *It is not the case that it is possible*. In lexical semantic terms, with logical negation, the prefixed and unprefixed stems are complementaries. This is normally the case when the unprefixed stem designates a non-gradable property. However, it will be recalled that complementaries often display their characteristic properties only within certain limited domains. For instance, *dead* and *alive* are only complementaries within the domain of living things. For the above test to work, we must assume that domain limitations and presuppositions of the unprefixed stem are operative. Take the case of *married/unmarried*. We would not say of John that he was unmarried, if he was a three-year-old boy: *unmarried* is only applicable to marriageable persons. On the other

hand, it is clear that it is not the case that he is married. So, to guarantee logical equivalence between *John is unmarried* and *It is not the case that John is married* we must interpret *married* in the same way in both. Similar remarks apply to *John disobeyed the order* and *It is not the case that John obeyed the order*: these are logically equivalent only if we assume that the order was directed at John in both cases, that the order was logically possible to carry out, and so on. It might be wondered why we do not use straightforward sentence negation in the test, that is, why we do not compare, for instance, *John is unmarried* and *John is not married*. The answer to that will become clear when we consider polar negation.

17.4.2 Polar negation

Polar negation is typically the result when a negative affix is applied to a stem which designates a gradable property. In such cases, the term and its negation are not complementaries but polar opposites, i.e. antonyms, which give rise to contrary, not contradictory propositions. Take the case of *like* and *dislike*. There is a continuous scale of emotional affinity towards someone or something:

adore → like → (indifferent) → dislike → hate

Consider the following sentences:

- (18) John likes Mary.
- (19) John dislikes Mary.
- (20) John doesn't like Mary.
- (21) It is not the case that John likes Mary.

With normal intonation for (20), (19) and (20) are logically equivalent. But (21) is different from both, because it includes the possibility that John is indifferent to Mary, neither liking nor disliking her (we shall ignore for present purposes the question of whether (21) also excludes *adore*). What happens is that both the affixal negation and the ordinary sentence negation switch the meaning from the positive part of the scale to an equivalent point on the negative part of the scale and exclude the mid-point. The same is true for *kind/unkind*, *polite/impolite*, *intelligent/unintelligent*.

17.4.3 Reversive negation

When applied to a verb denoting a change of state or location, a negative affix normally forms a reversive opposite:

embark/disembark, *mount/dismount*, *dress/undress*, *tie/untie*, *screw/unscrew*,
cork/uncork, *pack/unpack*, *nationalize/denationalize*

17.4.4 Privative negation

Privative negation involves the idea of removing something. The most frequent prefix is *de-* and the most frequent stem is a noun:

de-ice, defrost, demist, debug, defog, dehorn, delouse

There is a grey area between privative and reversive negation. For instance, is *degrease* a privative negative with a nominal stem, or a reversive negative with a verbal stem?

The suffixes *-less* and *-free* also cause privative negation. The difference between them is that *-less* does not produce a constant evaluative effect:

negative *pointless, useless, valueless*

neutral *a tailless breed*

positive *a fearless campaigner*

In these cases, the effect depends on the evaluative force of the stem: if the stem is evaluative, the affix reverses the force; if the stem is neutral, so is the affixed word. The suffix *-free*, on the other hand, indicates the absence of something considered undesirable: *trouble-free, fat-free yoghurt, lead-free petrol, hassle-free banking, fluoride-free water*.

17.4.5 Out-of-domain negation

The negative prefix *non-* usually acts as a straightforward logical negative. A non-contractual agreement, for instance, is simply one that does not involve a legally binding contract. But in a number of cases it contrasts in an interesting way with another negative prefix (usually *un-* or *in-*). Take the case of *non-human* and *inhuman*. The non-human carriers of a disease are simply carriers that are not human. There is no implied evaluative element. But inhuman treatment is not treatment by non-humans, but treatment by humans that is judged to fall short of certain ethical standards of behaviour expected of humans, in this case, mostly avoiding causing unnecessary suffering. A similar contrast can be intuited in *non-parliamentary/unparliamentary, non-professional/unprofessional, non-legal/illegal, non-expert/inexpert, non-realistic/unrealistic*. In each case, the word prefixed by *non-* indicates non-evaluatively something outside of some domain associated with the stem, while its partner indicates something within the domain which is negatively evaluated according to some scale of values operative within the domain.

17.4.6 Negative affixes and natural polarity

Negative affixes have an aversion to stems which have an inherent negative polarity of whatever variety (for detailed discussion of polarity see Chapter 7.3.6). So, for instance, we have *untrue* but not **unfalse*, *unkind* but not **uncruel*, *impolite* but not **unrude*, *unclean* but not **undirty*, *unwell* but not **unill* or **unsick*, *infrequent/uncommon* but not **unrare*, *undress* but not **unstrip*. And so on. But this is

not a strict rule. For instance, *selfish* is negatively evaluative, yet *unselfish* is perfectly normal.

17.4.7 Negation of negative affixes

One not infrequently encounters sentences in which a negatively affixed word is itself negated (as in this sentence). Logically, negatives cancel each other out, but the result of double negation in natural language is rarely a simple cancellation:

- (22) His visits are infrequent. His visits are not infrequent.
- (23) They are uncommon hereabouts. They are not uncommon hereabouts.
- (24) I dislike him. I don't dislike him.
- (25) It was not noticed. It did not go unnoticed.

The version of the sentence with double negation usually makes a weaker statement than the positive version. This is most noticeable with gradable terms, as in (22), (23) and (24); with complementaries, as in (25), there is less difference between the two versions.

17.4.8 Affixal negation and sentence negation

One difference between an affirmative sentence containing a negatively affixed word, on the one hand, and the corresponding negative sentence with an unaffixed word, on the other, is worth noting. Compare (26) and (27):

- (26) The King of France is *not* wise because there *is* no King of France.
- (27) *The King of France is unwise, because there *is* no King of France.

Sentence (26) exemplifies what Seuren (1985) calls **radical negation**, in which the presuppositions of the affirmative are cancelled (in this case, the existential presupposition). In (27), the existential presupposition cannot be cancelled.

Another difference can be attributed to the scope of the negative. Consider (28) and (29):

- (28) John did not confirm Bill's statement.
- (29) John disconfirmed Bill's statement.

In (28), but not (29), John could have refused to comment. This can be explained if we take the meaning of *confirm* to be "SAY (P is true)". Let P = Bill's statement. Then (28) can be represented as (30), and (29) as (31):

- (30) **not**-(John say (P is true))
- (31) John say (P is **not**-true)

discussion questions and exercises

1. Noun-forming suffixes

Classify the following derivations using Lieber's headings for *-er*:

employee standee addressee retiree
biographee attendee amputee escapee

Which one does not fit any of the headings?

2. The prefix *dis-*:

In which of the following words is the element *dis-* not a semantic constituent? Classify the meaningful examples of *dis-* according to the type of negation they represent (polar, logical, reversive, privative). Comment on any difficult cases:

<i>disadvantageous</i>	<i>disbelieve</i>	<i>disappear</i>	<i>disconnect</i>
<i>disarm</i>	<i>disprove</i>	<i>disobey</i>	<i>disagreeable</i>
<i>dishonest</i>	<i>disrobe</i>	<i>discontinuous</i>	<i>dispossess</i>
<i>discreditable</i>	<i>disinfect</i>	<i>disbud</i>	<i>disappoint</i>

Suggestions for further reading

Bauer (1988) provides a general introduction to morphology. For types of negation, see Horn (1981/2001). I have used Lieber (2004) mainly as a source of descriptive information; I have not engaged with her theoretical proposals.

Part 4

Pragmatics

Part 4 deals with topics which are normally held to fall under the heading of pragmatics. The topics of reference and deixis, and conversational implicatures, dealt with in Chapters 19 and 20, respectively, belong uncontroversially here, since they deal not only with aspects of meaning not overtly encoded as the conventional meaning of any linguistic expressions, but also with how language 'hooks onto' the extralinguistic world. Speech acts, on the other hand, the topic of Chapter 18, straddle the semantics/pragmatics divide somewhat uncomfortably: performative verbs arguably belong to lexical semantics. However, much illocutionary force is implicated, and to that extent belongs in pragmatics. It is customary to treat the various aspects of speech act theory as belonging to pragmatics, and convention has been followed here.

CHAPTER 18

Speech acts

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CHAPTER 18

Speech acts

18.1 Locutionary, perlocutionary, and illocutionary acts

Communication is not just a matter of expressing propositions. A 'naked' proposition, as we saw in Chapter 1, cannot communicate anything at all. To communicate we must express propositions with a particular **illocutionary force**, and in so doing we perform particular kinds of action such as stating, promising, warning, and so on, which have come to be called **speech acts**. It is, however, important to distinguish between three sorts of things that one is doing in the course of producing an utterance. These are usually distinguished by the terms **locutionary acts**, **perlocutionary acts**, and **illocutionary acts**.

18.1.1 Locutionary acts

Speech acts were first studied by the philosopher J. L. Austin. **Locutionary acts** were explained by Austin (1962) as follows:

The utterance of certain noises, ... certain words in a certain construction, and the utterance of them with a certain sense and a certain reference.

Notice that this conflates a number of distinguishable 'acts'; Lyons (1977) sets these out as follows:

- (a) produce an utterance inscription
- (b) compose a sentence
- (c) contextualize

The first of these refers to the physical act of speaking, i.e. producing a certain type of noise (or, in the case of written language, a set of written symbols). In principle, a parrot could do this. The second refers to the act of composing a string of words conforming to the grammar of some language (more or less well). (Searle (1969) groups these two together as performing an **utterance act**.) The third itself has two components. First, many sentences contain either lexical or grammatical ambiguities. Normally only one of the possible readings is intended: the speaker's intention in this regard forms part of the specification of the locutionary act

being performed. The second component is that any definite referring expressions in an uttered sentence normally have extra-linguistic referents intended by the speaker. The assignment of referents to referring expressions also forms part of the locutionary act. It can be seen, therefore, that if the sentence uttered is declarative in form, then performing a locutionary act includes the expression of one or more propositions. (Searle refers to **propositional acts**.) As far as is at present known, parrots cannot perform (b) or (c).

18.1.2 Perlocutionary acts

Perlocutionary acts are acts performed by means of language, using language as a tool. The elements which define the act are external to the locutionary act. Take the act of persuading someone to do something, or getting them to believe that something is the case. In order to persuade someone to do something, one normally must speak to them. But the speaking, even accompanied by appropriate intentions and so on, does not of itself constitute the act of persuasion. A successful act of persuasion has not occurred until the person being persuaded has performed the act in question. The same is true of the act of cheering someone up: this may well be accomplished through language, in which case it is a perlocutionary act, but even then the act does not consist in saying certain things in a certain way, but in having a certain effect, which in principle could have been produced in some other way.

18.1.3 Illocutionary acts

Illocutionary acts are acts which are internal to the locutionary act, in the sense that, if the contextual conditions are appropriate (see below), once the locutionary act has been performed, so has the illocutionary act. Take the act of promising. If someone says to another *I promise to buy you a ring* they have, by simply saying these words, performed the act of promising. Notice that it makes sense to say: *I tried to persuade her to come, but I failed*, or: *I tried to cheer him up, but failed*, but it makes no sense to say: *I tried to promise to come, but I failed*, except in the sense that one failed to utter the words, i.e. to perform the locutionary act.

The same illocutionary act can be performed via different locutionary acts: for instance *I saw Jane today* and *I saw your wife today* (on the assumption, of course, that the addressee's wife is called Jane). Furthermore, the same locutionary act can realize different illocutionary acts: for instance, *I'll be there* as a promise, prediction, or warning, and so on. It is also the case that a locutionary act can be performed without an illocutionary act thereby being performed (although Searle, for instance, denies this). For instance, in classes in elementary logic, propositions such as *All men are mortal* are often 'entertained' without anything being expressed beyond the bare proposition. The focus of the present chapter is on illocutionary acts.

18.2 The nature of illocutionary acts

18.2.1 Implicit and explicit illocutionary force

The illocutionary act aimed at by producing an utterance is known as the **illocutionary force** of the utterance. There is no communication without illocutionary force. How does a speaker convey, or a hearer understand, the illocutionary force of an utterance? We can first of all distinguish between **explicit** and **implicit** illocutionary force. In the former case, there is a specific linguistic signal whose function is to encode illocutionary force. We can distinguish two types, lexical and grammatical. The lexical type are illustrated by the following:

I promise you I will leave in 5 minutes.
 I warn you I shall leave in 5 minutes.
 I beg you not to leave so soon.
 I thank you for staying.

The verbs *promise*, *warn*, *beg*, *thank*, are known as **performative verbs**: they function specifically to encode illocutionary force. The grammatical type is illustrated by the following:

You wrote the article.
 Did you write the article?
 Write the article!

In these cases it is the grammatical form which encodes the illocutionary force.

According to what has just been said, it would appear that illocutionary force is always explicit. In the sense that every utterance encodes some indication of illocutionary force, this is probably true. However, the illocutionary force of an utterance is not always fully specified linguistically: what is not so specified is implicit. There are two main ways in which the effective force of an utterance may deviate from the overtly expressed force. First of all, it may differ in strength. For instance, the difference between a statement and an emphatic assertion is one of strength. A declarative sentence simply encodes the force of a statement: where it functions as an emphatic assertion, the difference may well be implicit, and must be recovered on the basis of context. The effective force of an utterance may also deviate from the overtly expressed force in respect of specificity. For instance, a number of more specific speech acts, such as promises, threats, warnings, and predictions, share the underlying feature of stating a fact. A declarative sentence simply encodes the force of a statement: where it functions as, say, a promise (in the absence of a performative verb), the difference must be construed on the basis of context. The second way in which the effective force of an utterance may differ from the overtly expressed force is when it performs a different illocutionary act. For instance, *You will leave immediately* has declarative form, i.e. it encodes the

force of a statement; but it could well be used to issue a command. In the latter type of case, it is common to speak of **indirect speech acts**.

18.2.2 Explicit performativity

18.2.2.1 Performative verbs

Performative verbs, that is, those verbs one of whose functions is to signal specific speech acts, have certain peculiar properties which set them apart from non-performative verbs. First of all, they can generally be recognized by the fact that they can occur normally with *hereby*. (We are talking here about semantic normality, i.e. lack of anomaly. The result may well be somewhat stilted.)

- (1) I hereby undertake to carry out faithfully the duties of Royal Egg-Sexer.
- (2) I hereby declare the bridge open.
- (3) I hereby command you to surrender.

This use of *hereby* is not possible with non-performative verbs of speaking:

- (4) *I hereby persuade you to accompany me.
- (5) *I hereby recount the history of my family.
- (6) *I hereby tell the truth.

Performative verbs can be used either performatively or descriptively; in the latter use they are no different from non-performative verbs:

- (7) John is always promising to do things, but he never does them.
- (8) He ordered them to leave the premises.
- (9) Who is going to christen the baby?
- (10) He went round congratulating everyone.

Notice that in such descriptive uses of performative verbs, *hereby* is ruled out:

- (11) *John is always hereby promising to do things.
- (12) *He hereby ordered them to leave the premises.

The performative use of performative verbs is extremely restricted grammatically. They must be in the simple present tense. They may be active or passive; if active, then they must also be in the first person. Consider, first, active uses. Notice the following contrasts:

- (13) I (hereby) promise to pay you next week.
I (*hereby) promised to pay him the following week.
- (14) I hereby declare John Smith the duly elected Member for this constituency.
I have (*hereby) declared John Smith the duly elected Member for this constituency.
- (15) I hereby warn you that legal action will be taken.
I am (?hereby) warning you that legal action will be taken.

Similar contrasts are possible with passive uses:

- (16) Passengers are (hereby) requested not to smoke.
 Passengers were (*hereby) requested not to smoke.
- (17) You are (hereby) warned to leave immediately.
 They will be (*hereby) warned to leave immediately.
 They are at this moment being (*hereby) warned to leave.

Notice that there is no grammatical restriction on descriptive use, that is to say, the use of a performative verb in, say, present simple first person active form is not necessarily a performative use:

- (18) A: Are you clear about what you have to do?
 B: Yes, I (*hereby) christen the baby Jonathan, then I (*hereby) congratulate the parents and then I (*hereby) confess that I am the baby's father and (*hereby) promise never to reveal the fact.

The same is true of passive uses:

- (19) Passengers are (*hereby) regularly requested not to smoke.

Performative verbs are thus ambiguous in certain of their forms, and context is needed to disambiguate them. (Unresolved ambiguities are vanishingly rare.)

Performative verbs used performatively are often held to be non-truth-conditional. It is true that if someone says *I warn you to stay away from her* it doesn't make much sense to reply *That's not true*. (Notice that in reply to *I warned you to stay away from her*, a reply of *That's not true* would be perfectly normal and would deny that there had been a warning.) Similarly with *I congratulate you on your promotion*. However, there are also many performative utterances to which *That's not true* would provide a normal response:

- (20) A: I confess that I took the money.
 B: That's not true.
- (21) A: I predict that the world will end tomorrow.
 B: That's not true.

Such cases, however, do not prove that performative utterances are truth-conditional, at least in respect of their performativity. In (20), for instance, it can be plausibly claimed that it is not the veracity of the fact that a confession is being made that is being called into question, but the truth of the proposition that forms the content of the confession. Likewise, in (21), it can be claimed that B is not challenging the fact that A is making a prediction, but is denying the truth of what he is predicting.

It is, however, still possible to argue that performative utterances are truth-conditional, in spite of the oddness of cases like (22) and (23):

- (22) A: I warn you to stay away from her.
 B: *That's not true.

(23) A: I congratulate you on your promotion.

B: *That's not true.

One might argue that the reason for the oddness of B's answer in (22) and (23) is not because A's performative is non-truth-conditional, but because it is necessarily true, like *Bachelors are unmarried*. The speech acts of warning or congratulating are performed by saying the words *I warn...* and *I congratulate...*, respectively, and therefore cannot be denied. However, this argument is weakened by the fact that unlike *Bachelors are unmarried*, confirmation is just as odd as denial:

(24) A: Bachelors are unmarried.

B: That's true.

(25) A: I congratulate you on your promotion.

B: *That's true.

The position taken here is that the arguments for the non-truth-conditional nature of performativity are the more convincing.

It was implied above that if a performative utterance overtly expressed a proposition, then a denial of its truth is not anomalous (as, for instance, in (20) and (21)). However, the presence of an embedded proposition does not guarantee normality:

(26) A: I warn you the roads are slippery.

B: That's not true, the ice has melted.

(27) A: I bet you £500 that I can get Mary to go to bed with me.

B: ?That's not true.

A's utterances in both (26) and (27) express a commitment of sorts to the truth of an incorporate proposition, but B's reply in (27) is less normal. It seems that if an utterance expresses a proposition whose truth is contingent rather than necessary, the normality of saying *That's not true* depends on the relative salience of the performative part of the meaning and the propositional part. For instance, in the case of *I warn you the roads are slippery*, the important part of the meaning (for most hearers) is that the roads are slippery, not that the speaker is delivering a warning. On the other hand, in *I bet you £500 that I can get Mary to go to bed with me*, the nature of the performative act is crucial. It is therefore a matter of salience, and graded normality.

18.2.2.2 Grammatical performativity

Most languages have grammatical ways of indicating the illocutionary force of an utterance. Four sentential forms (sometimes called sentential moods) are commonly recognized:

DECLARATIVE: *John is brave.*

INTERROGATIVE: *Is John brave?*

IMPERATIVE: *Be brave, John!*

EXCLAMATIVE: *How brave John is!*

These grammatical forms perform the same sort of function that performative verbs do. Thus, the first three sentences above have an obvious relation to the following:

- (28) I (hereby) state that John is brave.
- (29) I (hereby) inquire whether John is brave.
- (30) I (hereby) urge John to be brave.

(Interestingly, the fourth has no performative verb equivalent: ??*I hereby exclaim*.... This point will be further elaborated below.) However, the range of choice of forms is much more limited than is the case with performative verbs, and hence the meanings are much less specific. It is therefore not possible, in general, to paraphrase the grammatical forms precisely in terms of explicit performative verbs. Let us examine more closely the four types illustrated.

Declaratives. It is obvious that sentences in **declarative** form can exhibit a wide range of illocutionary force. Something like *He's leaving* can function to inform someone of the fact, to ask whether it is true (normally with appropriate intonation), as a promise, or a threat, or a command, or even a congratulation. Because of this wide range, doubts have been expressed as to whether declarative form encodes any sort of speech act at all (in fact the doubts in some quarters extend to interrogatives and imperatives). Austin's original treatment drew a distinction between what he called **performative sentences** and **constatives**, and declaratives fell into the latter category. Later he decided that declaratives, too, were performatives, and that there was no difference in principle between *John is brave* and *I (hereby) state that John is brave*, except that in the latter case, the performative verb was explicit. It is also worth remembering that declarative sentence form has often been regarded as in some sense the 'basic' sentence form, and it is easy to go from this to regarding it as a 'neutral' form, from which all others are 'derived'. It is therefore not surprising that it has a wide range of applicability. This notion of basicness has a parallel in lexical meanings. Compare the colour name *red* with, say, *orange*. *Red* has a wide range of 'extended' uses, as in *red hair*, *red earth*, *red wine*, many of which are not objectively red at all. *Orange*, on the other hand, cannot be used so freely: something described as *orange* must have a colour much closer to the prototype. However, *red* also has a clear prototype. This phenomenon is quite widespread. Take *circle* and *pentagon*. If someone says: *The mourners stood in a circle around the grave*, the circle may be very approximate indeed. But if someone says: *The mourners stood in a pentagon round the grave*, the disposition of the mourners is much more constrained. It is in this sense, perhaps, that the declarative sentence form can be viewed as basic. Being 'basic', it can be extended in ways that other forms cannot. But it nonetheless has a much more restricted, non-extended range of interpretations. And in its prototypical manifestations, it commits the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, and thus belongs to the same family of illocutionary meanings as *assert*, *state*, *declare*, *claim*, etc. The various performative verbs mentioned can be regarded as specifications of the

meaning of the straight declarative prototype. (The use of a performative verb also has the effect of highlighting the performative aspect of the sentence: with all grammatical performatives, the performative meaning is relatively backgrounded, but this is especially the case with declaratives.) It would be a mistake, however, to believe that every declarative, to be understood, must be 'translated' into a sentence containing one of the overt performatives. (This is no more true than a claim that, for instance, *It's red* cannot be understood unless the precise named shade of red, e.g. *scarlet*, *crimson*, *maroon*, *brick red*, can be recovered.) An alternative view is that the declarative form does nothing but express the proposition, and that any performative force arises in the form of implicatures. This approach, however, ignores the fact that the prototypical function of the declarative form of sentences is to assert a fact.

Interrogatives. Prototypically, **interrogatives** are used to ask questions, that is, they express ignorance on some point, and aim at eliciting a response from a hearer which will remove the ignorance. There are two sorts of question. The first sort effectively specify a proposition and express ignorance as to its truth: these are the so-called **Yes/No questions**, because they can be satisfactorily answered with a simple *Yes* or *No*. So, for instance, *Is John brave?* presents the proposition "John is brave" and is intended to elicit a response which indicates whether that proposition is true or not. The other sort, known as **Wh-questions**, present an incomplete proposition, and aim at eliciting a response which completes the skeleton proposition in such a way that the resulting proposition is true. So, for instance, the question *What time is it?* presents the skeleton proposition "The time is X", and has the function of eliciting a response that provides a value for X which makes the complete proposition true. Interrogatives (of both types), like declaratives, have a range of non-prototypical uses; but in their prototypical uses they fall into the same sort of semantic area as performative expressions such as *ask*, *enquire*, or *demand to know*.

Interrogatives are sometimes held to be a type of imperative. Thus, the meaning of *Is John brave?* might be paraphrased "Say *Yes* if the proposition 'John is brave' is true and *No* if it is false." Likewise, the meaning of *What is the time?* can be paraphrased "Give me a value for X such that the proposition 'the time is x' is true." These paraphrases are obviously imperative in nature, and equally clearly capture directly at least some of the meaning of the corresponding interrogatives. This analysis gives a good account of examination questions. These have the function of instructing candidates to produce a quantity of linguistic output under certain semantic (and secondarily syntactic, etc.) constraints. Notice the absolute equivalence between *What are the reasons for.....?* and *State the reasons for.....* in an exam context. Notice also that a form such as *State the reasons for.....* will still be regarded as an examination **question**. Another interesting observation is the parallelism between *Open the door, please* and *What is the time, please?*

However, the imperative analysis deals less successfully with cases like *Now where did I leave my wallet?*, said when one is alone. It might be argued that the speaker in such a case is addressing the question to an imaginary hearer, and ordering them to give an answer. But this does not seem intuitively correct: such questions are not usually accompanied by such images. Lyons suggests that in such cases one is not **asking** a question, but merely **posing** it, and that posing a question is expressing doubt or ignorance. Lyons also points to the fact that if someone says *No!* in answer to a command, one is refusing to carry out the desired action, but if one says *No* in answer to *Is John here?*, one is not refusing to answer the question, but is actually answering the question.

It is necessary to make a distinction between saying that questions are a type of imperative, and saying that questions have an imperative-type component to their meaning. There is also a distinction between saying this and saying that questions prototypically have an imperative-like component. (The latter is what will be claimed here.) Notice that the strong imperative analysis omits any mention of an expression of ignorance. Such analyses rely on this being supplied inferentially in the contexts in which it occurs; likewise with the expression of a desire for the ignorance to be removed.

An alternative analysis on the lines of the imperative analysis is to say that what a question really means is an expression of ignorance, leaving the imperative component to be supplied inferentially in the contexts which call for it. This analysis handles the *Where did I put my wallet?* case, but deals less well with the examination case.

It is argued here that none of these reductive analyses accounts satisfactorily for the overwhelming strong intuition that the *real* meaning of a question, its prototype, includes at least the imperative component, the desire for the removal of ignorance, and the expression of ignorance. With this complex as central, it is easy to see other, non-prototypical readings clustering round it, forming a family resemblance structure with varying degrees of resemblance. In this way we can portray INTERROGATIVE as a conceptual category of the familiar prototypic sort.

However, this perhaps does not cover all uses of the interrogative form. Consider (31):

(31) Boy, have I got news for you!

Arguably, this is not a peripheral sort of question. It is not a question at all—more of an exclamation (the exclamation mark fits quite happily). There are therefore grounds for regarding the interrogative form as at least two ways ambiguous.

Imperatives. The prototypical use of an **imperative** is to direct or urge the addressee to do something:

(32) Shut that door!

The prototypical meaning of the grammatical imperative lies in the same semantic area as that of a set of explicit performatives, such as *order*, *command*, *enjoin*,

beg, *beseech*, *request*, and so on, but as usual, is not synonymous with any of them.

Some analyses of imperatives (for instance, Palmer (1986: 29–30)) argue that the strong directive force observable in, say, a military command, is not a property of the imperative as such, but arises from the recognized authority of the speaker. Palmer points to the fact that *Come in!* in response to a knock on the door is not strongly directive, but is in fact a granting of permission. He suggests that the basic meaning of the imperative is the expression of a generally favourable attitude to the action indicated (if a higher-ranking military person expresses a favourable attitude to some action, a lower-ranking addressee will infer that s/he had jolly well better do it!). However, this is not entirely convincing. If someone says *Peel those potatoes!*, the directive force is not at all dependent on the authority of the speaker (although the felicity of the command is). The directive force is, however, dependent on whether the action is more likely to benefit the speaker or the hearer (see the discussion of the 'cost-benefit' scale in Chapter 20). It is arguable that the prototypical use of the imperative is both directive, and aims to elicit actions which are beneficial to the speaker. Hence cases like *Come in!* in answer to a knock on the door, which are only weakly directive, or *Have a nice holiday!*, where the concern is for the benefit of the addressee, on this view would not be prototypical uses.

However, as with interrogatives, there are uses which do not fall under the prototypic concept. Consider (33):

- (33) Take another step, and I'll shoot.

The negative force of this use of the imperative shows up in the (relative) normality of the use of *either* in (34):

- (34) Take another step and I'll shoot. And don't move your hand, either.

Another example is *Now get out of that!*, said to someone one who has just been lured into a trap. These are not peripheral instances of getting someone to do something, and must be regarded as distinct readings of the imperative form.

Exclamations. Curiously, **exclamations** cannot be performed by any performative verbs, although there are verbs with meanings describing such actions:

- (35) What a lovely day it is!
 *I hereby exclaim what a lovely day it is.
 (I exclaimed what a lovely day it was.)

It seems that one does not exclaim by saying the word *exclaim*: one exclaims by calling something out in a loud voice:

- (36) ?How boring it all is, exclaimed John in a barely perceptible whisper.

The word *exclaim* therefore does not encode an illocutionary act. It is too loaded with manner meaning, like *whisper*:

- (37) ?I hereby whisper that you mustn't do that in the presence of the Queen.

What, then, *is* one doing with the exclamative form? Is it a speech act? Notice that it is truth-conditional and can be contradicted:

(38) A: What a lovely day it is!

B: Is it hell!

But it is not the primary purpose of an exclamation to inform:

(39) A: Tell me about your day.

B: *What a lovely day I've had!

The encapsulated information seems to be presupposed, although one can enter the house after a day at the beach and say *What a lovely day I've had!* as a way of informing the occupants of the fact that one has had a lovely day. (However, presuppositions can often be used to inform. Take the exchange in (40). B's reply presupposes that John's wife has died, and yet is quite normal even if A does not know this:

(40) A: Why does John live like a hermit?

B: He never got over his wife's death.)

An exclamation expresses a psychological attitude to a fact. Intuitively, it is not performativizable, at least in English, but it is not clear why not.

18.2.3 The 'performative hypothesis'

There are certain types of utterance whose properties seem to suggest that even implicit performatives have a 'hidden' or underlying explicit performative verb. This is the essence of the **performative hypothesis**, according to which every implicit performative has a 'deep' structure something like:

I (hereby) V_p you (that) S

where *V_p* is a performative verb, and *I (hereby) V_p you (that)* is optionally deletable without change of meaning. The claimed advantages of this proposal are that certain otherwise puzzling phenomena receive a natural explanation.

18.2.3.1 Reflexives

(41) The letter was addressed to John and myself.

(42) People like yourself should be given every assistance.

(43) ?The letter was addressed to herself.

On the face of it, there is no antecedent for the reflexive pronoun in (41) and (42) (notice, too, the ungrammaticality of (43)), but if there is an underlying performative verb with a first person subject and second person indirect object, then the mystery is explained.

18.2.3.2 Adverbs

(44) Frankly, I couldn't care less.

(45) What's the time, because I don't want to miss my train?

At first sight, it is not clear what *frankly* in (44) and the *because*-clause in (45) modify; however, the natural interpretation of these suggests that it is the performative verb in each case: "I tell you frankly that I couldn't care less"; "I ask you what the time is, because I don't want to miss my train."

Attractive though it might seem, this analysis runs into serious difficulties, and is now out of favour. Two of the problems may be mentioned. Consider sentences (46) and (47):

(46) I hereby state that I am innocent.

(47) I am innocent.

By the Performative Hypothesis, these should mean the same and therefore should have identical truth conditions. But even if we admit that (46) has truth conditions (which is denied by many) it is true irrespective of whether the speaker is innocent or not; this cannot be the case with (47).

More problems occur with adverbs. For instance, there seems no reason, under the Performative Hypothesis, why *hereby* is allowed with explicit performatives (48), but not with implicit performatives (49):

(48) I hereby ask you what the time is.

(49) *Hereby what is the time?/ *Hereby it is three o'clock.

Also the interpretation of many adverbs seem to require the (underlying) presence of verbs not proposed in the Performative Hypothesis:

(50) Honestly, who do you think will win?

This does not mean "I ask you honestly...", but "Tell me honestly...".

18.3 Classifying speech acts

18.3.1 Assertives

These commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition:

state, suggest, boast, complain, claim, report, warn (that)

Notice that *boast* and *complain* also express an attitude to the proposition expressed other than a belief in its truth.

18.3.2 Directives

These have the intention of eliciting some sort of action on the part of the hearer:

order, command, request, beg, beseech, advise (to), warn (to), recommend, ask, ask (to)

18.3.3 Commissives

These commit the speaker to some future action:

promise, vow, offer, undertake, contract, threaten

18.3.4 Expressives

These make known the speaker's psychological attitude to a presupposed state of affairs:

thank, congratulate, condole, praise, blame, forgive, pardon

What seems to distinguish these from *boast* and *complain* is that the attitude expressed by the latter is primarily an attitude towards the state of affairs (or the proposition). In the case of Searle's expressives, the attitude is more towards the persons involved. These do form an intuitively satisfying set, and *boast* and *complain* intuitively do not belong here.

18.3.5 Declaratives

(Declarative speech acts are distinct from the declarative sentence form discussed above.) These are said to bring about a change in reality: that is to say, the world is in some way no longer the same after they have been said. Now in an obvious sense, this is true of all the performative verbs: after someone has congratulated someone, for instance, a new world comes into being in which that congratulation has taken place. What is special about declaratives? The point about these is, first, that they cause a change in the world over and above the fact that they have been carried out. This, however, is again true of all the other verbs, but notice that in the case, say, of *congratulate*, such effects would be perlocutionary, whereas in the case of declaratives they are illocutionary. The second point is that they standardly encode such changes. So, if someone says *I resign*, then thereafter they no longer hold the post they originally held, with all that that entails.

resign, dismiss, divorce (in Islam), christen, name, open (e.g. an exhibition), excommunicate, sentence (in court), consecrate, bid (at auction), declare (at cricket)

There is a finite number of explicit performative verbs in English (several hundred), but there is no reason to believe that there is a theoretically finite set of possible speech acts.

18.4 Conditions for successful performance of speech acts

There are normally contextual conditions which must be fulfilled before a speech act can be said to have been properly performed. These are usually called **happiness conditions** or **felicity conditions**. Some of these are of course conditions on any sort of linguistic communication, such as the fact that speaker and hearer understand one another (usually speak the same language), can hear one another, and so on. The following conditions are more germane to the present chapter and are worth spelling out (after Searle).

18.4.1 Preparatory conditions

Preparatory conditions do not define the speech act, but are necessary in the sense that if they do not hold, the act has not been carried out (it is said to have **misfired**). In the case of declarative speech acts, the person performing the act must have authority to do it, and must do it in appropriate circumstances and with appropriate actions. For instance, it is not enough for someone to break a bottle of champagne on the bows of a ship, and say *I name this ship Venus*, for the ship either to acquire an official name, or to change its name. A proper ceremony must be enacted, with officially recognized participants. The same is true of christening a baby. Even in the case of resigning from a job or position, just saying the words *I resign*, at breakfast, say, does not constitute a resignation: there are proper ways of resigning and channels for communicating such a decision. In the case of a promise, the hearer must prefer the promised action's accomplishment to its non-accomplishment, and the speaker must have reason to believe that the eventuality promised will not happen in the normal course of events. For a command, the speaker must be in authority over the hearer, must believe that the desired action has not already been carried out, and that it is possible for the hearer to carry it out. And so on.

18.4.2 Sincerity conditions

For **sincerity conditions** to be fulfilled, the person performing the act must have appropriate beliefs or feelings. For instance, in performing an act of asserting, the speaker must believe the proposition he is expressing; when thanking someone, one ought to have feelings of gratitude, when making a promise, one should sincerely intend to carry it out, and so on.

If the sincerity conditions are not met, the act is actually performed, but there is said to be an **abuse**.

18.4.3 Essential conditions

Essential conditions basically define the act being carried out. Thus for a promise, the speaker must intend his utterance to put him under an obligation to carry out

the act which corresponds to its propositional content. For a request, the speaker must intend that the utterance count as an attempt to get the hearer to do what is requested; for a statement, the hearer must intend that the utterance count as a guarantee of the truth of the statement; for a question, the hearer must intend that the utterance count as an attempt to elicit the appropriate answer from the hearer, and so on. If the essential conditions are not met, the act has not really been carried out.

18.4.4 Other conditions

Prototypically, the hearer should recognize the speaker's intention to perform the illocutionary act in question in uttering the words in question. This is called **uptake**. Uptake must be distinguished from **acceptance**: the fact that one refuses to accept say an apology or a resignation does not mean that the speaker's intention has not been recognized. Generally uptake does not seem to be a necessary condition for speech acts, but there are doubtful cases. Take the case of boasting. Does someone boast if nobody who hears the utterance thinks it's a boast? There are indications that it *is* still a boast. First, it is anomalous to say: *?John tried to boast, but everyone thought he was just stating the facts*. Secondly, one can hear a statement and subsequently find out that someone was boasting: *He told me he had just lost £10,000—I didn't realize at the time that he was boasting*.

Ideally, the speaker's actions subsequent to the utterance should be consistent with the purport of the speech act carried out. Thus, someone who makes a promise should carry out the promised action, someone who orders someone else to do something should not be angry if they subsequently do it, after asking a question, one should give time for an answer to be given, someone who names a ship should not thereafter refer to it by a different name, etc. These inappropriate actions do not destroy the validity of the speech act, but they nonetheless indicate that something is amiss. They may be termed **breaches of commitment**.

Discussion questions and exercises

1. Performative verbs

Which of the following verbs are performatives?

bet (consider both meanings)

pray (in the religious sense)

admire

interrogate

deplore

regret

celebrate

2. Searle's classification of speech acts

Which of the following performative verbs can be classified under more than one of Searle's headings?

complain warn confess bemoan

3. Locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts

Thinking of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (and their components), consider which of them (a) a parrot, and (b) a computer could reasonably be expected to be able to perform.

Suggestions for further reading

For the 'Austin-Searle' version of speech act theory see Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). A good survey of various approaches to speech acts (but not including Leech or Relevance Theory) is Levinson (1983: ch. 5). The views of Leech (who rejects the Austin-Searle position) can be found in Leech (1983). The outlines of a relevance-theoretical account are given in Blakemore (1992: ch. 6).

CHAPTER 19

Reference and deixis

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Reference and deixis

19.1 Reference

The topic of reference has been the cause of an outflow of gallons of recondite ink: some of the subtlest philosophical minds have grappled with it, and the debates have been contentious and inconclusive. What is put forward in this chapter is necessarily somewhat simple-minded.

Under the heading of reference we encounter one of the most fundamental and vital aspects of language and language use, namely, the relations between language as a medium of communication between human beings, and the world about which we communicate. One of the most basic things that we do when we communicate through language is to pick out entities in the world and ascribe properties to them, or indicate relations between them. Reference is concerned with designating entities in the world by linguistic means.

Right at the start we encounter deep controversies. One of these concerns the basic nature of reference. Let us take it for the moment as uncontroversial (it isn't) that one of the terms in an instance of the relation of reference is something in the world. What is the other term? The obvious choices are a linguistic expression, such as *Tom*, or *the man*, and the person speaking. It is commonplace in discussions of linguistic matters to say things like: *Barack Obama* (in, say, *Barack Obama is to visit Ireland in May*) refers to the current president of the United States. Here we are putting forward an expression and a person as the terms of the relation of reference. However, there is no privileged one-to-one relationship between the expression *Barack Obama* and the Barack Obama who is President of the USA. There may well be numbers of Barack Obamas in the world. *Barack Obama* refers to the current president of the USA only when some speaker intends to use the expression for that purpose on some particular occasion. Here we have a unique one-to-one relation, namely, that between the speaker's intention to refer and the president of the USA. We shall therefore adopt Searle's position, and say that reference is not an inherent property of expressions, but is a speech act. This is not to say, of course, that the speech act of reference is unconstrained by the

linguistic expressions used; on the contrary, certain expressions are specially adapted for this function, as we shall see.

Two further uses of the word *reference* should be signalled, one of which will be occasionally adopted here, the other not. It is common to speak of the reference of a linguistic expression, meaning the things it has been used on some specific occasion to refer to. So, for instance, in a newspaper headline: *Barack Obama to visit Ireland in May*, the reference (in this sense) of *Barack Obama* is the present president of the USA. This seems to be harmless, and does not lead to confusion. (If there is any danger of confusion we shall use *referent(s)*.) Another common usage is to say that, for instance, *dog* refers to the class of dogs, and that the reference of *dog* is the class of dogs. This is contrary to our usage, and it will not be adopted. We shall follow Lyons (1968), and say that *dog* **denotes** the class of dogs, and that the class of dogs constitutes the **denotation** of *dog*. (There is of course a relation between what an expression denotes and what acts of reference it can be used in the performance of: the former constrains the latter.)

We have so far assumed that the distal term of the relation of reference is something in the world. But this, too, is rife with controversy, and goes even deeper than the controversy just mentioned. Are there, indeed, any such things as 'things in the world'? Are things not mental constructs? In which case we should specify that reference is to do with things in the experienced world, not in the objective world. Of course, we assume there is some connection between these two worlds, but the relation between referrers and the objective world is indirect. This position is compellingly argued by Jackendoff (1983), and will be assumed here to be correct, although we shall continue to speak merely of things in the world.

19.1.1 Definite reference

There are various types and modes of reference. We shall concentrate on three: **definite reference**, **indefinite reference**, and **generic reference**. There is no doubt that it is definite reference which is the most crucial for the functioning of language. (In the philosophical literature it is usually called 'singular definite reference'; for our purposes, however, there are no particular problems in moving from singular to plural.)

To open the discussion of definite reference, consider the two sentences below:

- (1) The man gave it to her.
- (2) A man gave it to her.

How does the meaning of sentence (1) differ from the meaning of sentence (2)? Obviously both indicate an act of giving by some adult male person (we shall ignore the rest of the sentence). The features which distinguish (1) from (2) can be set out as follows:

- (a) The intended referential target is necessarily a particular entity (believed by the speaker to fall into the category MAN, but notice that the speaker can be

mistaken about this and still, on some particular occasion, successfully refer), who can in principle be uniquely identified by the speaker.

This means that the speaker should be able, on demand, to give information that for him distinguishes the (man) in question from all other men. The speaker may not be able to name the man, or even give any descriptive information: for instance, what makes the man unique may be only that he occasioned an auditory experience on the part of the speaker at a particular time and place.

- (b) The speaker intends that the referential target should come to be uniquely identified for the hearer, too.

This is, in fact, the main point of the act of reference. Once again, the information which enables the hearer to uniquely identify the intended referent may be minimal.

- (c) The act of reference brings with it to the hearer an implicit assurance that they have enough information to uniquely identify the referent, taking into account the semantic content of the referring expression (or other properties of the expression which limit the search space), and information available from context, whether situational (i.e. currently perceivable), linguistic, or mental (i.e. memory and knowledge).

Searle makes a quaint distinction between a 'successful' act of reference, which requires only (a) to hold, and a 'fully consummated' act of reference, which requires also (b). (The act of reference is thus rather like having an orgasm: one can do it on one's own, but to be fully consummated we need a partner.) We can follow Searle, and add the following features/conditions for a fully successful act of referring (not necessarily distinctive for referring):

- (d) Normal input and output conditions hold.

This just means that, for instance, speaker and hearer speak the same language, that the utterance is both audible and comprehensible to hearer, and so on.

- (e) The act of reference is embedded in a more inclusive speech act.

An act of reference cannot stand on its own as a communication: *the man* communicates nothing, except when embedded in a sentence like *I saw the man*, or as an answer to a question such as *What can you see?*

- (f) The speaker intends that the hearer should recognize his intention to refer by virtue of his having produced the utterance in question.
- (g) Prototypically, the part of the utterance the production of which is intended to signal the intention to refer, should have a form which conventionally performs this function.

In general, the identification of the referents of definite referring expressions is necessary so that the hearer can reconstruct the proposition(s) being expressed by the speaker, as these specify the arguments of such propositions.

19.1.2 Indefinite reference

Sentence (2) above is an example of indefinite reference. The essence of indefinite reference is that the identity of the referent is not germane to the message: that is, nothing hinges on the individual features of the referent, only the class features indicated are presented as relevant. Notice that this has nothing to do with whether or not either speaker or hearer are in fact able to effect a unique identification of the referent. Suppose someone complains of extreme boredom, and in response I pick up a book and offer it to him, saying either (i) *Here, read a book*, or (ii) *Here, read this book*. What is the difference? In both cases the identity of the book is clear to both participants. The difference is that in (i), the identity of the book is not germane, just the fact that it is a book, whereas in (ii), the identity of the book is presented as (a) important to the message (e.g. *You're bound to find this particular one interesting*), and (b) accessible to the hearer.

We have so far only considered the indefinite article as a signal of indefiniteness. However, all the following sentences contain indefinite expressions:

Come up and see me sometime.
 I expect he's hiding somewhere.
 You'll manage somehow.
 Are you looking for something/somebody?
 She met this sailor.
 Some man gave it to him.
 To make the spell work, you have to say certain words.

Consider now the following sentence:

(3) To get the automatic door to open you have to say a word.

This can be interpreted in two ways: either it is the case that any word will open the door, or a specific one is necessary. This is the classic **specific/non-specific** distinction in indefinites, which has given rise to much discussion. It is usually claimed that the distinction is operative only in certain modal contexts, e.g. with *want*, *must*, *have to*, and so on (the standard example is *Mary wants to marry a Norwegian banker*). It is true that there are circumstances where the difference is hard to intuit (e.g. *Mary married a banker*), but this may simply be because it is difficult to construct a context where the distinction would be relevant. It would be difficult to extend the idea of 'modality' to cover the following cases, where the distinction can easily be felt:

- (4) A: How did he get the door to open?
 B: He said a word.
 (5) A: Why was Mary angry?
 B: Because John bought a book.

The specific readings of *a word* in (4) and *a book* in (5) are very close to "a certain word" and "a certain book", respectively. (I am referring here to what I assume

are central uses of *a certain X*; there are (presumably) marginal cases where the use represents the deliberate avoidance of a proper name for (presumably) non-semantic reasons (i.e. the proper name, would, other things being equal, have been appropriate):

- (6) I spoke to a certain person about you know what.

The 'specific indefinite' readings in (4) and (5) share with the meaning of a corresponding definite expression (*the word* and *the book*) that the identity of the referent, as opposed to merely the class of the referent, is relevant to the situation described; what distinguishes these readings from definites is that the speaker does not signal to the hearer that the identification of the referent is essential to the message being conveyed. Notice that *this* can also function as a specific indefinite:

- (7) We met this man in the pub.

This usage seems to signal that the man in question has been introduced as a topic about which more will be said; *a certain man* does not function in this way.

There has been some controversy about whether sentences like (3) are genuinely ambiguous between the two readings, or whether the specific reading is merely a contextual enrichment of the non-specific reading. This is somewhat difficult to decide. One can point to the fact that in some languages, the distinction is made grammatically:

- (8) Marie cherche un homme qui **peut** lui faire l'amour douze fois par jour.

- (9) Marie cherche un homme qui **puisse** lui faire l'amour douze fois par jour.

("Marie is looking for a man who can make love to her twelve times a day.")

In (8), Marie knows exactly who(m) she is looking for; in (9) she is simply overly optimistic. The difference is signalled by indicative vs subjunctive mood in the verb.

In Turkish, a difference of this kind can be signalled by the presence or absence of the direct object marker on the noun:

- (10) Bir **kelime** söyledi. ("S/he said a word"; non-specific)

- (11) Bir **kelimeyi** söyledi. ("S/he said a word"; specific)

But such observations are not conclusive as far as ambiguity is concerned. If we take it that the specific indefinite is more specific than the non-specific indefinite in the same, or a similar sense in which *dog* is more specific than *animal*, then we can apply the independent truth-condition test. Recall examples like the following:

- (12) A: Does John drink?

B: No, he'll just have an orange juice.

This shows that the specific reading of *drink* (= "drink alcohol") has independence. The specific reading of *child* (= "girl") on the other hand, does not pass this test:

- (13) A: Was it a child who answered the door?

B: *No, it was a boy.

We can now apply the same test to indefinites. First notice the normality of the following:

- (14) A: Do you have to say a certain word?
B: No, any word will do.

If a word is ambiguous, with "a certain word" as one of its readings, the following ought to be normal:

- (15) A: Do you have to say a word?
B: No, any word will do.

Clearly, this is not normal, and this is evidence for the lack of distinctness of the specific reading.

At least one analysis of indefinites (Hawkins 1978) claims that the use of an indefinite implies that reference is being made to one item out of a set of similar items. Suppose A says *I can't see to read in my bedroom* and B replies *Take a lamp from the dining room*. This seems to implicate that there is more than one lamp in the dining room, otherwise B would have said *Take the lamp from the dining room*. However, this is not quite true: the facts are more complex. Suppose B does not know how many lamps there are in the dining room. In that case, B will still say *Take a lamp*. . . . That is to say, the true implicature of *a lamp*, out of context, is that a plurality of (qualifying) lamps is not excluded. Speaker A will take an implicature that there is more than one lamp only if s/he knows (or assumes) that B knows how many lamps there are. The claim Hawkins should have made, therefore, is that the use of an indefinite implicates that reference is not knowingly being made to an item uniquely defined by the linguistic expression used. If the referent is known by the speaker to be thus uniquely defined, but the particular identity is not specially relevant, then some other construction must be used, for instance, *There's a lamp in the dining room you could use*.

19.1.3 Generic reference

Now consider the following sentences:

- (16) The tiger is a friendly beast.
(17) A tiger is a friendly beast.
(18) Tigers are friendly beasts.

Sentence (16) is ambiguous, with a reading which is irrelevant to our current concerns, but all three have readings which involve what is called **generic reference**, that is, reference to a class of referents. All of the above predicate friendliness as a general characteristic of the members of the class of tigers. None of them is inconsistent with minor exceptions, but all of them are inconsistent with the existence of a significant subclass of unfriendly tigers:

- (19) The tiger, with few exceptions, is a friendly beast.

- (20) ?The tiger is a friendly beast, although there are many that are not friendly.
- (21) A tiger is a friendly beast, although there is the occasional exception.
- (22) ?A tiger is a friendly beast, although many of them aren't.
- (23) Tigers, with few exceptions, are friendly beasts.
- (24) ?Tigers are friendly beasts, although many of them aren't.

None of the above is synonymous with *All tigers are friendly beasts* or *Every tiger is a friendly beast*:

- (25) *All tigers are friendly beasts, although there are a few exceptions.

There are two sorts of proposition involving generic reference as argument: either something is predicated of the whole class referred to, or something is predicated of each member of the class. These two readings available under the heading of generic reference are known as the **collective reading** and the **distributed reading**, respectively. The forms in (16), (17), and (18) have different affinities for these two uses. The form *the X* strongly prefers the collective reading:

- (26) The tiger is extinct.
- (27) The tiger is a widely distributed species.
- (28) *I like watching the tiger.

(Sentence (28) is of course normal if *the tiger* is understood as definite.) Sentence (29) may appear to require a distributed reading, since the possession of a long tail is a characteristic of each individual tiger. However, it is nonetheless arguably a statement about the class of tigers (in contrast to, say, (32) and (37)):

- (29) The tiger has a long tail.

The form *a(n) X* will accept only distributive uses:

- (30) *A tiger is extinct.
- (31) *A tiger is widely distributed.
- (32) A tiger has a long tail.
- (33) I like watching a tiger.

The form *Xs* will accept either use:

- (34) Tigers are extinct.
- (35) Tigers are widely distributed.
- (36) I like watching tigers.
- (37) Tigers have long tails.

19.1.4 Non-referential uses of referring expressions

It is as well to note that although the expression *a tiger* in many of its uses can be used in the act of indefinite reference, it is not always so used, as for instance, in (38):

- (38) This animal is a tiger.

Most analysts agree that this sentence does not state that there is a tiger that this animal is identical with. For instance, it does not make sense to ask *Which tiger is it?* It seems clear that *a tiger* here stands for a set of properties which are being predicated of *this animal*. This enables us to give a satisfying account of (one) reading of *John is a complete politician*, namely, that John has all the properties which are characteristic of (prototypical) politicians.

19.1.5 Reference and information structure

The topic of this section is to some extent a digression; however, it is important and does not crop up anywhere else in the book. It concerns one aspect of how acts of reference function in discourse. The focus here will be on what is called **information structure**, in particular, on the notions of **topic** and **focus**. The presentation of the basic concepts of information structure in this section draws heavily on the much more detailed account in Lambrecht (1994). As a first introduction to information structure, consider the following sentences (stressed items are in bold italic):

- (39) John gave Bill *the book*.
- (40) Bill was given *the book* by *John*.
- (41) The book was given to Bill by *John*.
- (42) It was *John* who gave Bill the book.
- (43) It was *the book* that John gave to Bill.
- (44) *The book*, John gave to *Bill*.
- (45) *Bill* was the one John gave the book to.

All of these, in some sense, say the same thing, namely, let us say, that there was a transfer of ownership of a specific book from John to Bill. They all share the same truth conditions, and hence have the same propositional content. (We might say that they all express the same proposition, but this is not uncontroversial.) In what respect, then, do they differ? The answer is that they differ in respect of information structure. At this point, it will suffice to draw attention to two aspects of this difference. Firstly, there are differences to be observed in the above sentences in the topic, that is to say, in what the sentences are about, and consequently, in what is said about the topic. For instance, in an easily accessible reading of (39), the topic is John, and what is said about him is that he gave Bill the book. In (44), on the other hand, the topic is the book, and what is said about it is that John gave it to Bill; in (43), these roles are reversed: the topic is "what John gave to Bill" and the comment is that it was the book.

The second aspect of difference in information structure is that the above sentences differ in their discourse relations, that is to say, in the sorts of discourse context in which they are normal and coherent. The following are illustrative (the position of the sentence stress is important):

- (46) A: What did John do?
 B: (i) John gave Bill *the book*.
 (ii) **The book*, John gave to *Bill*.
 (iii) *Bill was given the book by *John*.
- (47) A: Did Bill get anything?
 B: (i) Bill was given *the book* by *John*.
 (ii) *It was *John* who gave Bill the book.
 (iii) *It was *the book* that John gave to Bill.
- (48) A: What happened to the book and the picture?
 B: (i) *The book*, John gave to *Bill*.
 (ii) **Bill* was the one John gave the book to.
 (iii) *It was *John* who gave Bill the book.

Information structure, then, is not concerned with the semantic content of utterances as such, but with how a given piece of information can be differently 'packaged' linguistically, and how particular ways of packaging are appropriate in different discourse contexts.

19.1.5.1 Topic

The topic of a proposition is the referent that the proposition is about. In Lambrecht's system, it often corresponds with the subject of the sentence expressing the proposition, but not necessarily, and it often corresponds with the first element in the sentence, but again, not necessarily. For Lambrecht, the notion of topic is a pragmatic one, in the sense that the topic of a proposition cannot be characterized without taking context into account.

The independence of topics from syntactic structure is shown by the following three sentences (from Lambrecht), which all contain the same grammatical structure *The children went to school* (and express the same proposition), but which differ in respect of topic in different contexts:

- (49) (i) (What did the children do next?) The children went to *school*.
 (ii) (Who went to school?) The *children* went to school.
 (iii) (What happened?) The *children* went to *school*!

In 49(i), the referent of the NP *the children* is what the sentence is about. The children in question are already established as a current focus of interest. The VP *went to school* provides information about the children which the speaker judges will add to the addressee's knowledge. Lambrecht calls sentences of this type, in which the grammatical subject expresses the topic, **topic-comment sentences**. They are characterized by a low-pitch accent on the head noun in the subject NP, and a focus (i.e. high-pitch) accent on one of the elements of the VP.

In contrast, the sentence in 49(ii) does not have the function of giving information about the children. The speaker here presupposes that some person or persons went to school, and identifies these for the addressee as the children. Lambrecht

calls this type of sentence an **identificational sentence**. Other structures in English have a similar identificational function:

WH-cleft: The ones who went to school are the *children*.

It-cleft: It was *the children* who went to school.

Lambrecht argues against assigning a topic for sentences like 49(ii). He rejects the suggestion that the topic might be the open proposition "X went to school" (which has a missing constituent) on the grounds that, because of its incompleteness, it cannot have a referent. It is not clear, however, why the topic cannot be the proposition "Someone went to school".

The topic in 49(iii) is once again not the subject of the sentence, although, as Lambrecht admits, the sentence does in some sense convey information about the children. The primary function of the proposition expressed in 49(iii) is to report an event, and the topic, established by the preceding question, is the presupposition that some event occurred. Lambrecht calls this type of sentence **event-reporting**. The following are further examples of this category:

(50) It's *raining*.

(51) There's a *fly* in my soup.

(52) Mum, my *bum*'s itchy.

Sentences (50) and (51) are often said to have **dummy subjects**: they do not refer to anything, and hence cannot express topics. The subject in (52) certainly refers to something, but this has not been previously established as a topic, and the real function of the sentence is to report a new state of affairs (remember that for current purposes, 'event' includes 'state of affairs').

Two ways of assessing the topic status of a constituent are the 'as-for test' and the 'about test'. Consider the following as paraphrases of 49(i):

(53) As for the children, they went to school.

(54) He said about the children that they went to school.

These are both satisfactory paraphrases of 49(i), showing that *the children* expresses the topic. But they are not satisfactory paraphrases of 49(ii) or 49(iii). For 49(ii), the nearest we can get to a paraphrase is something like (55) or (56) (a degree of unnaturalness is unavoidable here):

(55) As for those who went to school, they were the children.

(56) He said about those who went to school that they were the children.

There is no equivalent version of either test for 49(iii), which is not surprising, since it does not have a topic.

19.1.5.2 Focus

The notion of focus is usually applied to declarative sentences. It is the part of the sentence which is crucial to the ability of the sentence to convey a piece of

information to the hearer, that is to say, a piece of new knowledge, which in the speaker's judgement the hearer does not already possess. Lambrecht proposes three main types of focus structure: predicate focus, argument focus, and sentence focus.

Predicate-focus structures. This type is exemplified by B's reply in (57):

(57) A: Why is Bill in prison?

B: He stole some *jewels*.

In this sentence, the topic, *Bill*, is expressed by the unstressed pronoun *he*, and the predicate *stole some jewels*, expresses a property which when predicated of Bill conveys new information to the hearer. This property constitutes the focus of the proposition expressed by the sentence.

Argument-focus structures. This type is exemplified by B's reply in (58):

(58) A: Who stole the jewels?

B: *The new janitor* stole the jewels.

In this case, the NP *The new janitor* expresses the focus. The presupposition evoked by A's question is the incomplete proposition "x stole the jewels", and B's reply indicates that replacing *x* by *The new janitor* creates a proposition that expresses new information. Notice that it is not correct to say that *The new janitor* expresses new information, because only a proposition can carry information. Lambrecht introduces a distinction between the semantic subject and predicate of a proposition and the pragmatic subject and predicate. B's reply in (58) encodes the proposition "The new janitor stole the jewels", which has "the new janitor" as semantic subject, and "stole the jewels" as semantic predicate. But at the same time, the above sentence encodes a different, pragmatic structuring of the proposition, in which the pragmatic subject is "the x that stole the jewels", and the pragmatic predicate is "is the new janitor". In the predicate-focus structures, the semantic and pragmatic subjects and predicates coincide, whereas in argument-focus structures they do not. Argument-focus structures are sometimes described as 'contrastive'.

Sentence-focus structures. This type is exemplified by (59):

(59) Your *trousers* are on fire.

This evokes no presupposition and has no topic. The focus domain is the whole sentence: what is asserted is the whole proposition. (Notice that in English this accentual pattern is ambiguous with regard to information structure: (59) could equally be interpreted as having argument focus. The choice of interpretations is influenced by context, general likelihood, and so on.)

19.2 Definite referring expressions

We shall henceforward concentrate on definite reference, which is arguably the prototypical type of reference.

19.2.1 Types of definite referring expression

The following types of expression are definite referring expressions in English:

- (i) NP with definite determiners: *the book, this book, that book, my book, your book, his book, her book, our book, their book*
- (ii) personal pronouns: *I, you, he, she, it, us, they*
- (iii) proper names: *John, Mary, Paris, Gone with the Wind, Middlemarch, Notre Dame, Parsifal, Guernica*
- (iv) certain locative adverbs: *here, there, yonder*
- (v) certain temporal adverbs: *now, then, yesterday, next Xmas, (certain verb tenses)*

Definiteness can also be argued to be present in some unexpected places. For instance, definiteness is a property of 'latent' elements as these were defined in Chapter 14.3.1.2, an example of which is the 'missing' direct object of the verb in (60):

(60) Mary's watching.

The use of a relative adjective like *tall* can be argued to involve covert reference to a reference value for underlying variable property. Thus, *Mary is tall* means something like "Mary's height is greater than X to a noteworthy extent", where X is the reference value for height. Lastly, the use of an ambiguous word such as *bank* likewise involves a kind of definiteness: in, for instance, *We finally reached the bank*, the speaker intends one specific sense out of the possibilities to be operative, and intends that the hearer be able to identify the same sense, its identity being crucial to the message.

Except in the case of latency, it is not possible to convey pure definiteness, and even in such cases, the search space for the intended referent is heavily constrained by selectional restrictions and so on; that is to say, it is virtually always the case that some sort of extra help is given to the hearer in selecting the intended referent(s), and this is typically overtly encoded. So, for instance, *the book* indicates that the intended referent falls within the denotation of *book* (i.e. is an instance of the concept BOOK), *he* indicates that the referent is singular, human, male, and neither speaker nor hearer in the current speech situation, *John* constrains the search to those who bear that name, and so on. The types of help that speakers give to hearers can be roughly grouped under three headings: **describing** (e.g. "human, male", "book", etc.); **pointing** (e.g. *that book* is relatively distant from speaker), and **naming**. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive; a given expression may

incorporate more than one of these. We shall now examine separately and in greater detail, three central types of definite referring expression: noun phrases with the definite article, proper names, and deictic expressions.

19.2.2 Definite descriptions (NPs with definite article)

It has been sometimes claimed that the way definite descriptions work is to provide sufficient information to distinguish the referent from all other possible referents, that is, to render it unique (presumably in the universe). This is not of course ruled out: if someone refers to *the boil on my nose*, and there is clearly only one boil on the speaker's nose, then that illustrious object has been distinguished from all other objects in the universe. But this cannot be a general truth about definite descriptions. Consider the following three instances:

(61) A: Have you seen *Pride and Prejudice*?

B: No, but I've read *the book*.

The emphasized NP refers successfully, but the only descriptive information offered is that the referent belongs to the class of books, and there are millions of these in existence.

(62) A: (in restaurant) I didn't want custard on my pie.

B: You should have told *the waitress*.

(63) A: (at breakfast in hotel on holiday in Durham) What shall we do today?

B: I think we should go and see *the cathedral*.

In none of these cases is enough information given overtly within the definite NP to uniquely distinguish the intended referent, yet they all refer successfully. How is this possible? Of course, in each of the above cases, the hearer ends up in possession of enough information to characterize the referent uniquely. The question is really: what principles govern the amount of information the speaker has to provide explicitly? Sometimes, this may be quite a lot:

(64) Could you send me the small blue book near the right-hand end of the second shelf from the bottom of the bookshelves in my bedroom?

In (61), (62), and (63), the amount of information is quite limited (even so, it is perhaps more than strictly necessary in some cases: for instance, in (61), *I've read it* would probably do), but at least in some cases it is necessary. So, for instance, *the building* would probably not suffice for (63). What we shall say, is that the job of the speaker is to give enough information to uniquely specify the referent within some limited domain. Then, provided that the hearer can identify the relevant domain, the information given will suffice. So, for instance, in (61), the hearer merely needs to identify a book pertaining to something that has just been mentioned; in (62), there are thousands of waitresses in the world, but only one relevant to the current immediate situation that A and B find themselves in; a similar explanation is valid for (63), except that the situation is a broader and less

immediate one. This is all very well, but merely pushes the problem back one stage: how does the hearer identify the relevant domain within which the description offered uniquely characterizes the referent? The process goes something like this. The hearer makes an ordered search through possible domains, roughly in the order: (i) immediately preceding discourse (more strictly, within short-term memory), (ii) immediate situation (currently available to senses), (iii) broader situation, (iv) memory/general knowledge. We need to assume that these are in decreasing order of accessibility (in terms of amount of cognitive work needed to activate them). So, if a qualifying referent is found in the first domain, then that is taken as the intended referent (if there is more than one qualifying referent in the first domain, then the speaker has failed to refer successfully). If there is no qualifying referent in the first domain, the hearer then searches the next most accessible domain, and so on, until he finds a suitable potential referent. This account (adapted from Cruse (1980)) is broadly compatible with a relevance-theoretical account (see Chapter 20).

19.2.3 Proper names

Proper names, too, have given rise to a great deal of discussion, especially within the philosophy of language. There are two diametrically opposed extreme positions with regard to proper names. One of these says that proper names have no meaning whatsoever: this is usually expressed by saying that they have extension, but no intension. That is to say, they are unlike, for instance, *the dog*, which can be used to refer to canines in the extralinguistic world by virtue of the intension, that is, the semantic content, of *dog*. Whereas a proper name like John can be used to refer to an individual referent, it does not do so by virtue of its semantic content, but by virtue of some other property, namely, that it is borne by the referent as a name. Imagine we have a batch of identical boxes which we may want to designate individually at some time. The most convenient way would be to stick a numbered label on each of them: we could then talk about *Box 235* and so on. It is clear that the numbers do not constitute in any way descriptions of the boxes, and have no essential connection with their respective boxes. On the view of proper names currently under examination, proper names are no more meaningful than the numbers on the boxes. They function to individuate members of large sets of similar entities, for which distinguishing them by means of descriptions would be either cumbersome, if sufficient details were known, or impossible, if they are not known. Hence, we find proper names used particularly for people and places.

The opposite view of proper names from the above is that proper names function as abbreviated descriptions, that is, they stand for the sum of the properties that distinguish the bearer from all other referents, or, to put it another way, they get their meaning by association, not with generic concepts, in the way that common nouns like *dog* do, but with individual concepts. Thus, just as we say *It's a dog* entails *It's an animal*, and this is ultimately a consequence of the properties of the concepts DOG and ANIMAL, in reference to the present writer, we would also say

It's Alan entails *It's a man*, because of the relation between the individual concept ALAN CRUSE and the generic concept MAN. It might be objected here that there are many individuals who bear the name *Alan*, and hence the entailment does not hold. However, there is more than one concept DOG (viz. the part of an old-fashioned fireplace where vessels are placed), and hence, by this argument, the former entailment does not hold, either. But there is no reason why ambiguity should invalidate entailment, as long as a determinate sense is intended on the occasion of use. On this view, the only difference between the *dog* case and the *Alan* case is the greater degree of homonymy in the latter. (Notice that in a use such as *There were three Alans in the room*, the word *Alan* is not being used as a proper noun, that is to say, there is no activation of associated individual concepts; *Alan* functions in such cases as a common noun meaning "person bearing the name *Alan*".)

Here we have two apparently irreconcilable views. In fact, it will be argued here that both are (partially) correct. Let us first look at objections to each of the views. A standard argument against the second view, that proper names are abbreviated descriptions, is that the continuing use of proper names for reference is immune to changing conceptions of the nature of the referent: proper names have stable referential properties. We may, for instance, discover that someone we have come to think of as a gypsy princess called Toni turns out to be a Welshman: we can on such a discovery, say, without a hint of contradiction, *My friend Toni isn't a gypsy princess, but a Welsh ex-miner* (notice we don't say *He's not Toni after all* nor *Toni doesn't exist any more* nor even *Toni has changed*). How is this possible, if proper nouns stand for an individual concept? We shall return to this in a moment.

There are also arguments against the proposal that proper names are devoid of meaning. One is that there must be an associated set of properties of some kind, which are in some way defining, or at least distinctive, otherwise one would never be able to say *No, that's not John, that's Bill*. (Notice, that even after the traumatic discovery of the previous paragraph, one would still not be in a position to say *That's not Toni*: it is, on the other hand, inconceivable that the name would persist if *every* property changed.) Another argument, or at least pertinent observation is that many common nouns, have a similar property of denotational stability in the face of modifications in the concept. These are the so-called **natural kind** terms, like *water*, *gold*, *tiger*, and so forth. We shall at some point have to integrate these into our picture. A different line of argument is to point out that, for instance, it would be odd to christen a girl *John*, or *The Old Mill*, or even *Littlehampton*, nor would we expect a boy to be called *Daffodil*, or a country to be called *Mary*. We also say things like: *He doesn't look at all like a Cecil*. Why do we do this if (a) names have no semantic properties and (b) we expect to be understood?

We seem to be faced with a welter of apparently contradictory facts. Yet a satisfying account of proper-name-hood should accommodate them all without strain. Let us consider in more detail how proper names work, and inquire why languages all seem to have them, and what distinctive function they serve. The question can first be considered in the light of the three ways a speaker aids a

hearer in selecting the appropriate referent. It will be remembered that three main ways were postulated: describing, naming, and pointing. How does naming help the hearer? The case of naming is not fundamentally different from the case of describing, where a speaker gives enough descriptive information to render the referent unique in some relevant domain. Something similar is true of the use of proper names: the speaker uses a proper name when only one referent within the most relevant domain bears it; in other words, the name renders the referent unique within the domain. In a definite description, it is the descriptive information which performs the act of selection. Searle makes a point of declaring that "bears the name *John*" is not an adequate paraphrase of the meaning of *John*. And in many important ways this is true. However, it is by means of this aspect of its meaning that a proper name refers/selects its referent. It is clear that in most circumstances, referring by means of a proper name is much more economical than by means of description. In most everyday domains, there is only one John: another way of referring, however, would be necessary at a congress of Johns. It is probably an advantage, too, that proper names are, as it were, re-usable. Speakers normally have a limited inventory of possible proper names (at least for people). It would be uneconomical to have a different name for everyone one knows.

Searle also stresses the importance of the fact that a proper name must be associated with a set of properties—with an individual concept of some sort, in our terms. Otherwise it would not be possible to use a proper name consistently, i.e. by referring to the same individual on each occasion of use: we must have some way of recognizing that individual. The importance of the associated individual concept, however, goes even beyond that: in the act of expressing a proposition using a proper name in argument position, it is the individual concept which forms the true argument of which something is predicated. Notice, too, that a sentence like *Even John thinks that the story must be true* relies on the association of certain properties with *John*. It is also true, however, that we must not lose sight of the fact that changing an individual concept does not entail a change of name: the concepts associated with proper names are, in a sense, always 'interim', and liable to modification at any time. Again, this is unlike descriptions. Searle puts this forward as another functional virtue that proper names possess: their flexibility. It is useful to have ways of referring that are not tied to particular constant conceptual properties. It enables us to refer successfully to entities about which we know very little. A similar functional virtue attaches to natural kind terms. It might be proposed that these are particularly adapted to entities whose essences are mysterious. (It is a moot point whether, for instance, *STALLION* and *HORSE* are different sorts of concept, or whether they are basically the same sort of concept, but they are attached to the words *stallion* and *horse* in different ways.

19.2.4 Discourse referents and their mental representations

This section is based mainly on chapter 3 of Lambrecht (1994).

19.2.4.1 Discourse referents

Discourse referents are things that can be referred to in the course of a discourse, say, a conversation. These are either entities, such as things, people, places, times, quantities, and so on, or they are propositions. In terms of syntax, they are expressed by categories that function as arguments, that is to say, NPs, pronouns, certain types of subordinate clause. Expressions which function as predicates, such as adjectives and finite VPs do not refer to anything, but attribute properties to referents, or designate relations between referents. So, for instance, *is tall* in *John is tall* does not refer to anything, but attributes the property of tallness to John; *am surprised* in *I am surprised that John refused the offer* expresses a relation between the speaker and the proposition "John refused the offer".

Discourse referents are in a sense out in the world (bearing in mind that the world contains, as well as people and objects, language and the minds of speakers) and are in principle distinct from mental representations of referents. There are two significant parameters of variation concerning discourse referents and their representations which determine the use of definitive expressions: the identifiability of referents, and the degree of activation of their representations.

19.2.4.2 The identifiability of referents

The notion of identifiability is closely linked to the use of definite expressions. Briefly, the use of a definite expression such as, for example, an NP with a definite article or possessive pronoun, or a proper name, evokes a presupposition on the part of the speaker that the hearer is able to identify the referent. Being able to identify a referent, for current purposes, does not require familiarity with or knowledge of the referent. But it does require that the hearer have a mental representation of the referent which can function as a locus for attaching new information. Consider the following:

(65) A man came to the door this morning. He claimed to be collecting for charity.

The use of the indefinite *a man* in the first sentence carries a presupposition on the part of the speaker that the referent is not identifiable to the hearer, and functions as an instruction to the hearer to construct a suitable representation. The pronoun *he* in the second sentence carries a presupposition on the part of the speaker that the addressee already possesses a mental representation of the referent. But the only knowledge that the addressee has about this referent is that it was a man who went to the speaker's door that morning. However, the referent is identifiable in the sense that the hearer knows that the information expressed by *claimed to be collecting for charity* is to be applied to the individual who came to the door that morning.

19.2.4.3 The activation status of the mental representations of referents

By definition, if a hearer has a mental representation of a referent, then that referent counts as 'identifiable'. However, the mental representation of an

identifiable referent may not be currently present to consciousness. (Each of us has a vast store of knowledge which can be pressed into service as the occasion demands, but most of it is 'out of mind' at any given moment.) A representation which is 'on-stage' at a given moment is described as **active**. However, there are degrees of being 'not on-stage', depending on how easy it is to bring the representation on-stage. Lambrecht distinguishes two degrees of not-activeness: **accessible** and **inactive**.

An accessible representation is one which is in one's peripheral consciousness or background awareness. An inactive representation is one which is neither on-stage, nor, as it were, in the wings, but is perhaps not in the theatre at all (one must not push this metaphor too far). In psychological terms, we might say, as a rough generalization, that active representations are in short-term memory, and inactive ones in long-term memory. From this perspective it is not clear where accessible representations fit in—in any case, Lambrecht is in favour of a graded scale of activity, rather than discrete divisions.

In terms of the information structure of sentences, there are clear formal characteristics of (expressions of) active and inactive representations, with the intermediate type behaving sometimes like actives and sometimes like inactives. These points will be illustrated using English examples, but the general principles are widely applicable.

Active representations. The clearest signals that a speaker presupposes that a representation is active in the hearer's mind are (i) the use of pronouns, and (ii) unstressed pronunciation, i.e. the lack of a pitch accent (these are not mutually exclusive).

Inactive representations. Marking of an inactive representation is (i) by means of a pitch accent on the referring phrase, and (ii) by full lexical coding. Consider the exchange in (66):

- (66) John: Hello, Mary.
 Mary: (i) Hi. Oh, before I forget, **Tom** phoned me this morning, quite out of the blue.
 (ii) Hi. *Oh, before I forget, he phoned me this morning, quite out of the blue.

Mary's first reply shows that she presupposes that "Tom" is inactive in John's mind (he is referred to by means of a stressed lexical NP) and that he is identifiable by John (proper names are definite). Mary's second reply is anomalous because it expresses a presupposition that "Tom" is active in John's mind, an assumption that does not fit with the context. Mary's reply might have continued as follows:

- (67) (i) ... Tom phoned me this morning, quite out of the blue. He said he's resigned from his job.
 (ii) *... Tom phoned me this morning, quite out of the blue. **Tom** said he's resigned from his job.

In (i), the unstressed pronoun is used in the second sentence because the speaker can presuppose that a representation of "Tom" is active in the hearer's mind, having been evoked in the previous sentence. For the same reason, the stressed full lexical NP *Tom* is inappropriate.

Generally speaking, we can say that the use of an unstressed referring element in an utterance evokes a presupposition on the part of the speaker that a representation of the referent is active in the hearer's mind. However, the state of being active does not entail the use of an unstressed referring element—a presumed active representation may be coded by means of a stressed referring element, whether a pronoun or lexical item. In (68) (from Lambrecht), active referents are coded by stressed pronouns:

(68) I saw *Mary* and *John* yesterday. *She* says *hello*, but *he*'s still *angry* with you.

In (69), a stressed lexical item codes an active referent:

(69) A: Do you think I should plant the *rhododendron*, or the *lilac* in this corner?

B: I would put the *lilac* there.

In both cases, the stress serves to highlight one of two active referents, rather than to indicate a degree of activation. It follows from this that the use of a stressed referring expression does not necessarily indicate a presupposition of an inactive referent; however, an inactive referent does call for a stressed referring expression.

Accessible representations. The intermediate degree of activation of representations of referents, accessible, unlike active and inactive, does not have such clear linguistic correlates, but it is important in connection with topics, because the topic of a sentence must be active or accessible. Lambrecht recognizes three types of accessibility: textually accessible, inferentially accessible, and situationally accessible.

Textual accessibility. A referent is textually accessible if it has been mentioned in previous talk, but is not fully active, typically because some other referent or referents have displaced it from short-term memory, and is not completely inactive, either, and is easily recovered. Consider (70), said in a non-academic context:

(70) The lecturer arrived ten minutes late for the lecture, which was supposed to be on histology. But it had to be cancelled, because the projector wouldn't work. ?He/The lecturer just walked out, without even an apology.

There is some hesitation about using *he*, because one cannot be sure that the representation of the referent is still fully active in the mind of the hearer.

Inferential accessibility. A referent is inferentially accessible if it has not previously been mentioned, but its potential current relevance can be inferred from a currently active referent. One way this might happen is when a referent evokes a conventional scenario, or Fillmorean semantic frame, which contains associated

referents, For instance, mention of a restaurant can invoke referents such as waiter, menu, table, wine, fork, and so on.

Situational accessibility. A referent is situationally accessible if it is present in the immediate context of the discourse, but has not so far been mentioned, nor is it inferable from what has been said. Lambrecht gives the following example (p. 99):

For example, sitting in an office room with a friend I might say 'Those pictures sure are ugly' with reference to some photographs on the wall which I assume my addressee is not presently aware of but which I take to be easily accessible to him.

19.2.5 Indirect reference

Indirect reference is reference to something by means of a linguistic expression whose default use is to refer to something else. We have already encountered two species of indirect reference, namely, metaphor and metonymy (Chapter 12). But the phenomenon goes beyond these, and includes cases which would not normally be considered to fall under either. A typical sort of case involves characters in plays and films and the actors who play them. Imagine a situation where John and his wife Mary both act in a play. John plays a character called Ralph, and Mary a character called Elizabeth. In the play, Ralph and Elizabeth are lovers; the character Ralph is poisoned in the third act by Elizabeth's mother Joan (played by Mary's sister Alice), who hates him and doesn't want him to marry her daughter. In this situation, all the following sentences (and many more like them) have interpretations under which they make true statements:

- (71) John is married to Mary.
- (72) John and Mary are lovers.
- (73) Ralph and Elizabeth are lovers.
- (74) Ralph is married to Elizabeth.
- (75) John is poisoned in the third act.
- (76) Elizabeth and Joan are sisters.
- (77) Joan is Elizabeth's mother.

To account for this and similar cases, the cognitive linguist Gilles Fauconnier (1994) proposes an **identification principle**:

If two objects (in the most general sense), a and b , are linked by a pragmatic function $F(bF(a))$, a description d_a of a , may be used to identify its counterpart b .

In the above case, there is a pragmatic function, which we can label 'dramatic portrayal', which links John to Ralph, Mary to Elizabeth, and Alice to Joan. By virtue of this we can refer to actors by the names of the characters they portray, and vice versa. Notice that each of the sentences (71)–(77) has two distinct readings, one true and one false, without being, in the normal sense of the term, ambiguous (there is neither grammatical nor lexical ambiguity). Another pragmatic function that licenses indirect reference is 'pictorial representation':

(78) (looking at an old picture) You can't see Jane clearly because of the stain.

A pragmatic function of 'constancy of identity over time' allows us to refer to persons at an earlier stage of their life by their present functions, even though those functions did not apply at the time:

(79) My mother was only two years old when war broke out.

Fauconnier accounts for these sorts of case in terms of **mental spaces**. These are mental constructs in which alternative representations of states of affairs are held. The pragmatic functions underlie correspondences that are rather like Lakoff's metaphorical correspondences between domains, in that they connect entities across spaces. For instance, in the theatrical example mentioned above, there is a 'reality space' and a 'play space', each depicting a state of affairs, and there are correspondences which link individuals in one space with individuals in the other space. Example (79) requires a 'present-time' space and a 'past-time' space, the correspondence being based on the persistence of personal identity through time. The description *my mother* is obviously valid only in the present-time space, but can be used to refer to the same individual in the past-time space. Mental spaces have been put to a variety of uses which it is not possible to explore here.

19.3 Deixis

Deixis means different things to different people. For Bühler, any expression which located a referent in space or time was a deictic expression. Thus, for him, *The cat sat on the mat* contained a deictic locative expression, namely, *on the mat* (the sentence also contains a tense-marker, which is usually considered to be deictic). Later scholars have mostly restricted the term deixis to cases where the referent is located using the current speech event or one or more of its participants as reference points. In the sentence *The cat sat on the mat*, the cat is located with respect to the mat: the mat is thus the reference point, and the speech event plays no role. In the sentence *That cat sat on the mat*, however, the cat is located not only with respect to the mat, but also with respect to the speaker, *that* indicating (probably) that the cat was relatively distant from the speaker. A point of disagreement concerns the deictic status of the definite article. Some scholars consider it to be deictic, because the current context of situation is involved in referent identification. Others exclude the definite article, because it does not locate the referent on any specific parameter. We shall, at least at first, include all expressions which truly locate a referent with respect to (some aspect of) the current speech situation. We therefore include personal pronouns, but exclude the definite article. We shall use as a guideline as to whether to include some expression type the feature of whether a change in the speech-situation parameters would entail a change of expression for a given referent. Thus, someone referring to a book held by another person would say *that book*, but the holder of the book, referring to the same book, would

say *this book*; referring to 8 July on 7 July, one would say *tomorrow*, but referring to the same day on 9 July, one would say *yesterday*; a speaker refers to himself as *I*, but his hearer, referring to the same person, would say *you*. We shall initially recognize five main types of deixis: **person deixis**, **spatial deixis**, **temporal deixis**, **social deixis**, and **discourse deixis**.

19.3.1 Person deixis

Person deixis involves basically the speaker, known as the **first person**, the addressee, known as the **second person**, and other significant participants in the speech situation, neither speaker nor hearer, are known as **third person**. All of these, at least in English, come in singular and plural form and several are marked for case:

	Singular	Plural
1st person	<i>I/me</i>	<i>We/us</i>
2nd person	<i>you</i>	<i>you</i>
3rd person	<i>he/him, she/her it</i>	<i>they/them</i>

In many languages, pronoun usage encodes social deixis (see below). Notice that the third person singular forms also encode gender. It is important to realize that the occurrence of gender in these forms is not deictic, that is to say, it is not sensitive to aspects of the speech situation. In other words, not all the meaning of a **deictic expression** is deictic in nature.

A couple of remarks are worth making on the subject of plural forms of personal pronouns. First of all, there is a kind of dominance relation holding among the terms: first person dominates second and third, and second person dominates third. This manifests itself in the following way. If the group designated includes the first person, then a first person plural pronoun must be used, even if there is only one first person and thousands of second and/or third persons. Similarly, if there is no first person in the group designated, but at least one second person, then a second person pronoun is needed. Only if neither first person nor second person is present can plural forms of third person pronouns be used.

The second point concerns the **representative** vs **true** use of the plural pronouns. The word *we* is rarely spoken by a plurality of persons: there is normally a single speaker. This speaker represents the group to which he refers. On the other hand, *they* usually designates a plurality of present referents. Representative use is possible, but is more uncommon (e.g. in pointing to a single person and saying *They are going to Greece for their holidays*). In the second person, the two possibilities, of representative and true use, are more or less equally likely.

Some languages have a different first person plural form according to whether the represented group includes both the speaker and the addressee ('inclusive' form) or the speaker and others, but not the addressee ('exclusive' form). In Pidgin, for instance, the inclusive form is *yumi*, (in origin *you-me*) and the exclusive form is *mifella* (in origin *me-fellow*).

19.3.2 Spatial deixis

Spatial deixis manifests itself principally in the form of locative adverbs such as *here* and *there*, and demonstrative/determiners such as *this* and *that*. English has a relatively impoverished spatial deictic system, with only two terms, usually labelled **proximal** and **distal**. Many languages have three or more terms. The most common types of three-term system subdivide the distal category. There are two main ways of doing this. The first involves a **distal/remote** distinction. (English at one time had such a system, with three terms *here*, *there*, and *yonder*.) Spanish has such a system. The other type of three-term system does not strictly depend on distance, but is closely related to the person system, that is to say, the terms can be glossed "near to me" (= *here*), "near to you", and "not near to either you or me" (= third person). Older analyses of Turkish proposed this analysis. It is nowadays not considered correct, however. One suggestion as to the true nature of the Turkish spatial deictics is that within the distal category there is a **gestural/symbolic** distinction (see below). Spatial deictic systems with more than three terms incorporate such notions as 'visible'/'invisible', 'below the line of sight'/'above the line of sight', and so on.

Let us return now to English (although many of the observations will be more generally valid). The proximal term *here* means something like "region relatively close to the speaker", and *there* means "relatively distant from the speaker". It is important to realize, however, that 'relative closeness' is contextually determined. *Here* may represent an area less than the square metre on which the speaker is standing, or it could be something much vaster, such as *Here in our local galaxy cluster*. This is another species of definiteness: *here* is meaningless unless the hearer can locate the dividing line (in terms of distance) between *here* and *there*. (Paradoxically, there is no limit to how far away *here* can extend.)

The spatial deictics show a similar sort of dominance relation to the personal pronouns. We can illustrate this with *this* and *that*. The point is that the combination of *this book* and *that book* must be collectively referred to as *these books*, not *those books*. This encourages us to think of *this* as a **first person deictic**. (There is a small amount of evidence that *that* is ambiguous between second person and third person, in that *those* prefers to be either one or the other. I can refer to (i) *those books that you have* and (ii) *those books that John has*. If I subsequently say *Those books are very valuable*, there is a strong preference for interpreting this as either (i) or (ii), but not both together, unless you and John can be united in a joint second person reference.)

19.3.3 Temporal deixis

Temporal deictics function to locate points or intervals on the time axis, using (ultimately) the moment of utterance as a reference point. There are thus three major divisions of the time axis: (i) before the moment of utterance, (ii) at the time of utterance, (iii) after the time of utterance. The most basic temporal deictics in

English are *now* and *then*. *Now* is in some ways a kind of temporal *here*, and displays the same capacity for indefinite extension; that is, it can refer to a precise instant: *Press the button—NOW!*; or it can accommodate a wide swathe of time: *The solar system is now in a relatively stable phase* (notice, however, that the phenomenon of dominance is absent from temporal deictics, as is the association with first person). *Then* points away from the present, but is indifferent as to direction, which is normally indicated contextually (*We were happy then/OK, I'll see you then*).

Temporal deictics depend heavily on calendric notions, if we understand that term to subsume both clock and calendar. For instance, *today*, *yesterday*, and *tomorrow*, designate, respectively, "the period of 24 hours beginning at 12 o'clock midnight which includes the time of utterance", "the period of 24 hours beginning at 12 o'clock midnight which precedes the one including the time of utterance", and "the period of 24 hours beginning at 12 o'clock midnight which follows the one including the time of utterance". Notice that these terms' meanings include both deictic information (past, present or future) and non-deictic information ("period of 24 hours beginning . . .", etc.). In English, with the exception of *tonight*, only the 24-hour period has lexicalized deictics. For parallel references to other periods, we must use compound expressions containing the terms *this*, *last*, and *next*, or *tomorrow* and *yesterday*. With the former set, there are complications (and uncertainties) according to whether the time period is referred to by means of a proper name or not. Consider, first, cases where a proper name is not used. Expressions such as *this week*, *last week*, and *next week*, *this month*, *last month*, and *next month*, *this year*, *last year*, and *next year* are all interpreted calendrically, that is to say, to take the example of *week*, *last week* means "the period of seven days beginning on Sunday (or Monday) preceding the corresponding period which includes the time of utterance" (a non-calendric interpretation would be "the period of seven days preceding the time of utterance"). Notice that *Mary is here for a week/month/year* is not normally interpreted calendrically; *Mary is here for the next week/month/year*, according to my intuitions, can be either calendric or not.

If the proper name of a period of time is used, additional restrictions come into play. Take the names of days, first. The lexical items *today*, *yesterday*, and *tomorrow* have priority, so that, for instance, *this Wednesday* cannot be uttered on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. *Last Wednesday* cannot be uttered on Thursday to refer to the previous day, but may be used to refer to the Wednesday of the preceding week. Speakers disagree as to whether a reference to, say, Monday, said on the Wednesday of the same week, should be *this Monday* or *last Monday*; a parallel disagreement applies to a reference, said on the same day, to the following Saturday—some would say *this Saturday*, others *next Saturday*. In referring to months, *this July* means "the July falling within the calendric year which includes the time of utterance", with the exception that one does not normally say (with exceptions to be noted in a moment) *this July* if one is speaking

in July. With months, there is a similar uncertainty concerning the meanings of *last* and *next* as with named days.

It is, of course possible, and quite normal, to say, for instance, *This July is the hottest I have ever known*, when one is still within the period designated by *this July*. However, it is important to realize that the *this* in this usage is not a temporal *this*, that is to say, it does not belong to the contrast set which includes *last* and *next*. In fact, it is an extended use of the spatial *this*, and contrasts with *That July was the hottest I have ever known*. It is therefore not a specifically temporal deictic.

It has already been mentioned that verb tense represents a type of deixis. This will not be dealt with here, but in Chapter 16.

19.3.4 Social deixis

Social deixis is exemplified by certain uses of the so-called TV (*tu/vous*) pronouns in many languages. It will be illustrated here using examples from French. Arguments will be presented that not all the usages of TV pronouns fall properly under the heading of deixis. One which incontrovertibly does is where relative social status of speaker and hearer is signalled. There are three basic possibilities involving two communicants A and B: (i) A addresses B with *tu*, B addresses A with *vous*; (ii) A addresses B with *vous*, B addresses A with *tu*; (iii) A and B both use the same form (either *tu* or *vous*). The basic parameter here is social status: *tu* points downwards along the scale of social status with the speaker's position as reference point, *vous* points upwards, while symmetrical use signals social equality.

Turning now to instances of symmetrical usage of TV pronouns, let us inquire briefly into the factors which determine whether *tu* or *vous* is used, and whether such usage can properly be regarded as deixis. One factor is usually described by some such term as 'social distance': *tu* indicates intimacy, *vous* indicates lack of intimacy, or distance. It is tempting to draw a parallel here with the proximal and distal terms in spatial deixis, and say that *tu* is proximal and *vous* distal. I shall suggest two reasons why such a parallel should not be drawn. The first is that there is no validity in an argument from reverse metaphor. That is, just because the [+intimate/−intimate] distinction would make a satisfying metaphorical extension from the [proximal/distal] distinction of spatial deixis, it does not follow that that is what it is, especially if the forms used give no support to the derivation. In the present case, there is no spatial content in literal uses of *tu* and *vous* to support such a derivation. The second reason is that the dominance relations between [+intimate] and [−intimate] are the wrong way round. Recall that *here* dominates *there*: in the case of TV pronouns used to signal intimacy (or lack of it), V dominates T. It is hard to demonstrate this in French, because there is no distinct intimate plural form as there is in, for instance, German. But it can be shown. Imagine a group of people appointing one of their number as a spokesperson to address some individual. Suppose that the person chosen would naturally say *tu* to the person being addressed. Suppose further that the group contains individuals

who would naturally say *vous* to the person being addressed. What form does the spokesperson choose? French native intuitions unhesitatingly opt for *vous*.

As a clue to another factor affecting the choice between T and V consider the following situation. A husband and wife jointly front a news programme on TV. When they are on the air, they address one another as *vous*; off camera, of course, they use *tu*. Clearly neither relative social status nor intimacy can explain this. The deciding factor seems to be the formality or informality of the situation. In some languages, sensitivity to situation extends also to first and/or third person pronouns; there may also be a greater than two-way choice of forms (as in Thai). It is at least arguable that this parameter of variation cannot be laid at the door of deixis at all.

19.3.5 Discourse deixis

Discourse deixis refers to such matters as the use of *this* to point to future discourse elements, i.e. things which are about to be said, as in *Listen to this, it will kill you!*, and *that* to point to past discourse elements, as in *That was not a very nice thing to say*. In a similar spirit, the *hereby* of an explicit performative sentence could be said to point to current discourse: *Notice is hereby served that if payment is further delayed, appropriate legal action will be taken*. It is sometimes claimed that certain sentence adverbs, such as *therefore* and *furthermore*, include an element of discourse deixis in their meaning, as they require the recovery of a piece of previous discourse to be understood. *Therefore* and *furthermore* could be glossed: "It follows from that" and "In addition to that", respectively (where *that* is a discourse deictic). A distinction can be made between discourse deixis and anaphora, although the two are obviously related. Anaphora picks up a previous reference to an extralinguistic entity and repeats it. In *John entered the room. He looked tired*, the pronoun *he* refers to the same person that *John* refers to, but it does not strictly refer to the word *John* itself. This contrasts with *one* in *John saw a fox yesterday. Bill saw one, too*, which picks up a word in previous discourse, but not (necessarily) its referent. It must be admitted that in reference to a case like *therefore* the distinction between discourse deixis and anaphora becomes somewhat blurred.

19.3.6 Psychological use of spatial deixis

It may be presumed that spatial deixis is the prototypical variety, and is certainly the source for much metaphoric generalization. A relatively simple extension is into what Langacker calls 'abstract space'. This is exemplified by such usages as: *Here the argument runs into difficulties, What do you think of this idea of mine?/ that idea of George's?*. Ideas and arguments do not literally occupy space, but it is easy to think of them as if they did. This use of deixis sometimes seems to invalidate the generalization just given above regarding discourse deixis, namely, that *this* points forwards in discourse: $2+2=4$. *The truth of this proposition is guaranteed by mathematical logic*. We would have to say, here, that *this* is not discourse-deictic (otherwise we would be obliged to use *that*), but means something like "the proposition we have in the forefront of our minds".

Another extended use of spatial deixis is to signal emotive distancing or closeness:

- (80) A: Here comes Jane.
 B: I can't stand that woman.
 (81) This beautiful city of ours.

19.3.7 Gestural and symbolic deixis

Some uses of deictics require for their interpretation continuous monitoring of relevant aspects of the speech situation: in the clearest cases, the hearer has to be able to see the speaker and their gestures:

- (82) Put one over there and the other one here.
 (83) This is the finger that hurts, not that one.
 (84) Press the button when I give the word—NOW!
 (85) I want three volunteers: You, you, and you.

These are examples of **gestural deixis**. In other cases, such minute monitoring of the speech situation is not necessary, and in general, the relevant parameters for the deictic interpretation are established over relatively long periods of a conversation/discourse. This is called **symbolic deixis**:

- (86) (people at an exhibition) Isn't it interesting!
 (87) Isn't this weather gorgeous?
 (88) I've lived in this town for twenty years.
 (89) Those foreigners are always whingeing.

In general, the difference between these would seem to be a matter of degree. However, there is one significant consequence of the distinction, and that is that it is only in the case of gestural use that the place denoted by *here* need not include the location of the speaker (e.g. *Will you please sign here, sir?*).

Discussion questions and exercises

1. Latency and implicit reference points

Identify instances of implicit definite reference points, latent elements, etc. in the following:

- (a) I would recommend the other route.
- (b) Mary will ring up and see if there's still time.
- (c) Turn left at the next traffic lights.
- (d) That's rather a lot, isn't it?
- (e) The last sit-in was much better.

2. Types of deixis

Point out all the instances of deixis in the following, indicating what type is involved:

- (a) I understood that there would be an opportunity to meet her there later that week, and that I would be responsible for bringing the documents. At least, that's what John said.
- (b) Come out from behind there at once, Smith!
- (c) I met this chap at the concert, and we got talking. He said that this Xmas had been the worst he had ever spent. I'm meeting him again tomorrow.

3. *Bring* and *take*

Decide which of the following sentences have normal interpretations, and which have none. For those that have, specify any necessary conditions (e.g. the relative location of participants). On the basis of these data, give a concise specification of the deictic properties of *bring* and *take*.

- (a) Take it here.
- (b) Bring it there.
- (c) I will bring it to you.
- (d) I will take it to you.
- (e) I will bring it to John.
- (f) I will take it to John.
- (g) You will take it to me.
- (h) You will bring it to me.
- (i) You will bring it to John.
- (j) You will take it to John.
- (k) John will bring it to you.
- (l) John will take it to you.
- (m) John will bring it to Mary.
- (n) John will take it to Mary.
- (o) John told me he would bring it to you.
- (p) John told me he would take it to you.
- (q) Did John tell you he would bring it to me?
- (r) Did John tell you he would take it to me?
- (s) John told me he would bring it to Mary.
- (t) John told me he would take it to Mary.

4. Non-prototypical uses of deictics

Comment on the use of the italicized items in the following:

- (a) The visitors will arrive at Edinburgh Waverley Station at 3.00 pm. *Here* they will be met by our representative. (Assume the message originated in London.)
- (b) Jackson rubbed his hands with satisfaction: he was *now* in possession of all the facts.
- (c) I have been informed about your insubordination this morning. *This* is the third such incident this week.
- (d) What's all *this* about you leaving next week?

Suggestions for further reading

For illuminating discussions of reference and its varieties, and definite reference in particular, see Searle (1969), Hawkins (1978), Givón (1984), Chesterman (1991).

A thorough account of information structure is to be found in Lambrecht (1994). See also Chafe (1974, 1976) and Halliday (1967, 1970a, 1970b).

Further reading on deixis could usefully begin with Levinson (1983: ch. 2). See also Anderson and Keenan (1985).

CHAPTER 20

Conversational implicatures

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