Existing, Innovative, and Impossible Words
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1   Introduction

Different types of denominal verbs found in English [3]: *location verbs* (shelve the books, corral the horses), *locatum verbs* (butter the bread, paint the wall), *duration verbs* (summer in France), *agent verbs* (butcher the cow), *experiencer verbs* (witness the accident), *goal verbs* (group the actors), *source verbs* (piece the quilt together), *instrument verbs* (nail the sign up), *miscellaneous verbs* (lunch, fish)

Meaning of 'to x y' when x is a location verb: 'to put y in/on x'
Meaning of 'to x y' when x is a locatum verb: 'to put x on y'

Existing denominal putting verbs in English:

(1)   a.   She corralled the horses. (location)
        b.   She buttered the bread. (locatum)
        c.   She iced John's hand. (location or locatum)

Innovative denominal putting verbs in English:

(2)   a.   If you hand me the bread, I'll mustard it for you. (locatum)
        b.   She fanny-packed her money to keep it safe. (location)
        c.   Ann jellybeaned the gold. (locatum or location)

"Impossible" denominal putting verbs:

(3)   a.   # She bushed the fertilizer. (location) [6]
        b.   # She breaded the butter. (location)
        c.   # She papered the ink. (location)

"Impossible" schemas for 'to x y':

(4)   a.   ∗ It cowed a calf. (meaning: A cow did something to a calf.) [5]
        b.   ∗ He bushed a trim. (meaning: He gave a bush a trim.) [5]

Cross linguistic differences:

(5)   a.   ?? She shoed her feet. (locatum) (unacceptable in English, acceptable in French and Spanish)
        b.   ∗ Sie Augenbinde den Mann. (locatum) (meaning: She blindfolded the man. Impossible in German)[6]
        c.   ∗ Ta bao pingguo. (location) (meaning: She bagged the apples. Impossible in Mandarin)[2]

2   Commonsense Account

'to x y' can mean anything that the speaker can expect his audience to compute readily and uniquely on the basis of their shared mutual knowledge.[3]

- Trouble blocking impossible putting verbs as well as impossible schemas for 'to x y' (e.g., (5a) and (5b)):
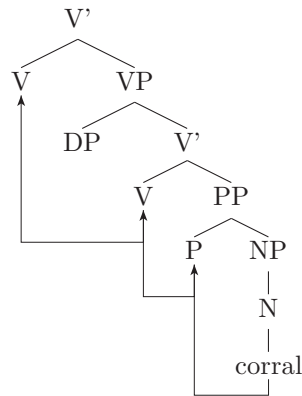
(6)   a.   # She breaded the butter. (location)
        b.   ∗ It cowed a calf. (meaning: A cow did something to a calf.)
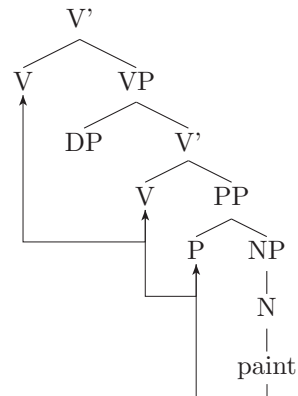
3 Structural Syntax Account

The meaning of 'to x y' is constrained by independently motivated syntactic rules.[5]

(7)   Structures projected by Location and Locatum verbs:
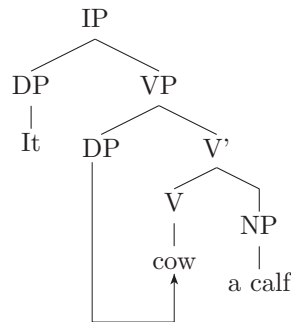
a. Location verb ('corral')

```
        V'
       /  \
      V    VP
          /  \
        DP    V'
             /  \
            V    PP
                /  \
               P    NP
                    |
                    N
                    |
                  corral
```

b. Locatum verb ('paint')

```
        V'
       /  \
      V    VP
          /  \
        DP    V'
             /  \
            V    PP
                /  \
               P    NP
                    |
                    N
                    |
                  paint
```

- Can explain why (8a) is good and (8b) is blocked:
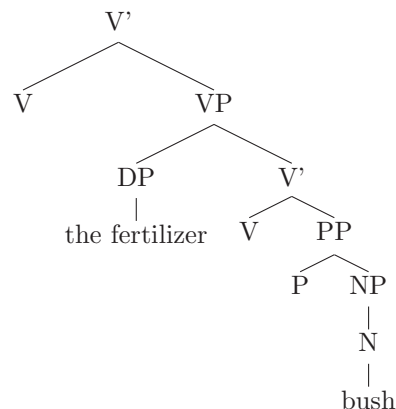
(8)   a.   She corralled the horses. (location)
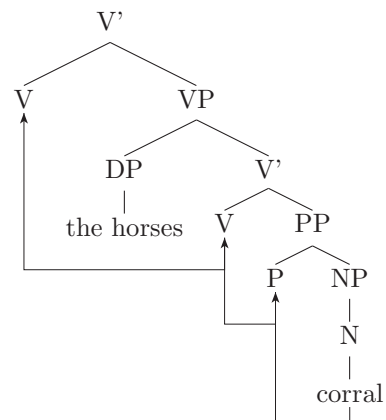   b.   * It cowed a calf. (meaning: A cow did something to a calf.)

```
            IP
           /  \
         DP    VP
          |   /  \
         It DP    V'
               /  \
              V    NP
              |     |
             cow  a calf
```

- Trouble blocking impossible cases of putting verbs:

(9)   Structures projected by "bush the fertilizer" and "corral the horses" are the same:
        a. # bush the fertilizer (location)

```
              V'
             /  \
            V    VP
                /  \
              DP    V'
               |   /  \
        the fertilizer V    PP
                          /  \
                         P    NP
                              |
                              N
                              |
                            bush
```

b. corral the horses (location)

```
              V'
             /  \
            V    VP
                /  \
              DP    V'
               |   /  \
         the horses V    PP
                       /  \
                      P    NP
                           |
                           N
                           |
                         corral
```

- This purely structural account doesn't explain how location and locatum verbs differ in meaning. [1]

4   Canonical Use

The meaning of 'to x y' for location and locatum verbs is constrained by an element of our conceptual knowledge about the canonical uses of the denoted objects.[6]

Meaning of 'to x y' when x is a location verb: 'to put y in/on x'
    Constraint: putting y in/on x is a canonical use of x
Meaning of 'to x y' when x is a locatum verb: 'to put x on y'
    Constraint: putting x on y is a canonical use of x

- Explains why (10a) is acceptable but (10b) is not.

(10)   a.   She corralled the horses. (location)
        b.   # She bushed the fertilizer. (location)

- Predicts the following should be unacceptable, when they are acceptable:

(11)   a.   She jellybeaned the roof. (locatum)
        b.   She corralled the dead horses. (location)
        c.   She painted the air. (locatum)

- Predicts the following should be acceptable, when they are unacceptable:

(12)   a.   # She papered the ink. (location)
        b.   # She canvassed the paint. (location)

- Trouble explaining cross-linguistic differences.

5   Semantic Feature Account

Denominal putting verb formation is constrained by (some structural syntax and) whether the source noun is categorized as a container (for location verbs) or a covering/coating (for locatum verbs).
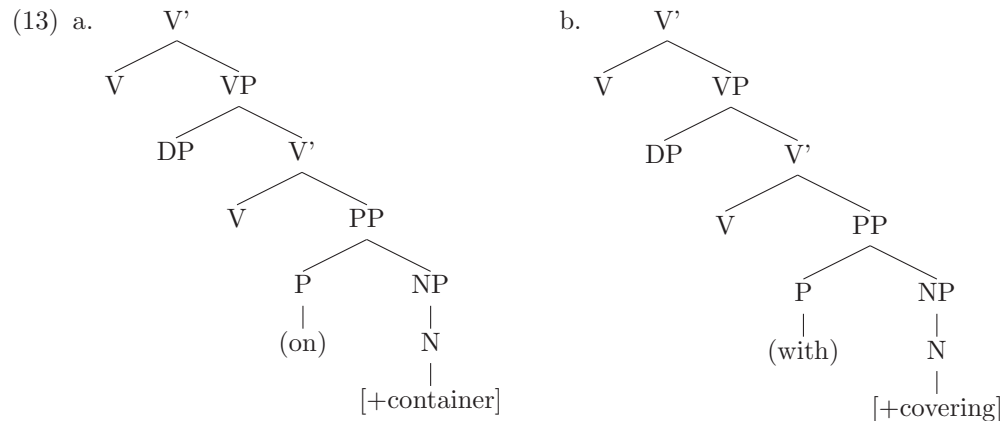
Meaning of 'to x y' when x is a location verb: 'to place y in/on x'
    Constraint: x is a [+container] noun
Meaning of 'to x y' when x is a locatum verb: 'to cover y with x'
    Constraint: x is a [+covering/coating] noun

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[1]Hale and Keyser[4] propose that there are two different abstract prepositions involved: (1) the one occuring in the structure projected by location verbs, which expresses the "terminal coincidence" relation and roughly corresponds to the English preposition "on", and (2) the one occuring in the structure projected by locatum verbs, which expresses the "central coincidence" relation and roughly corresponds to the English possessive "with". The "terminal coincidence" relation holds between an object and a place when the end point of the object's trajectory coincides with the place. For example, when one corrals horses, the end point of the horses' trajectory coincides with the corral. The "central coincidence" relation holds between an object and a place when the center of the object coincides with the center of the place. HK also gloss this relation as one of "close association or contact"[6]. When one paints a wall, the paint and the wall stand in the central coincidence relation (are brought into close association or contact with each other). However, this semantic constraint still won't block "bush the fertilizer" as a location verb, since it is plausible that when you put fertilizer on a bush, the bush and the fertilizer stand in the terminal coincidence relation.

(13) a.

```
        V'
       /  \
      V    VP
          /  \
        DP    V'
             /  \
            V    PP
                /  \
               P    NP
               |    |
             (on)   N
                    |
              [+container]
```

b.

```
        V'
       /  \
      V    VP
          /  \
        DP    V'
             /  \
            V    PP
                /  \
               P    NP
               |    |
            (with)  N
                    |
              [+covering]
```

- Explains why the following verbs are acceptable:

  (14) a. She corralled the horses. (location)
        b. She painted the wall. (locatum)
        c. Ann jellybeaned the gold. (location or locatum)

- Explains why the following verbs are blocked:

  (15) a. # She bushed the fertlizer. (location)
        b. # She breaded the butter. (location)
        c. # She papered the ink. (location)

- Problem cases?

  (16) The objects denoted by the source nouns aren't really containers, but location verbs are fine:
        a. ground the plane (location)
        b. beach the whale (location)

  (17) The objects denoted by the source nouns are containers, but the location verbs are questionable:
        a. ? to safe the money (location)
        b. ?? to container the paint (location)

- Cross-linguistic differences?

6   The Dynamic Lexicon

"The headline idea is that the common coin view of language is badly mistaken and that discourse participants routinely mint new linguistic items and also that what common coins there are are typically thin, in the sense that their meanings are underdetermined and fleshed out on a case by case basis. Likewise in some instances we come into conversations with fleshed out word meanings that need to be thinned out for purposes of the conversational context...the lexicon is dynamic and that we routinely negotiate little microlanguages on the fly as we move between groups and contextual settings. " [7] (For the formal details of such an account, see [1]

7 *

References

[1] Nicholas Asher. *Lexical Meaning in Context: A Web of Words*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[2] K.M. Chan and James H-Y. Tai. From Nouns to Verbs: Verbalization in Chinese Dialects and East Asian Languages. In Jose Camacho and Lina Choueiri, editors, *Sixth North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics. NACCL-6*, volume II, pages 49–74. Los Angeles: GSIL, USC, 1995.

[3] E.V. Clark and H.H. Clark. When Nouns Surface as Verbs. *Language*, 55:767–811, 1979.

[4] Ken Hale. Notes on World View and Semantic Categories: some Warlpiri Examples. In Pieter Muysken and Henk van Riemsdijk, editors, *Features and Projections*. Foris, 1986.

[5] Ken Hale and Jay Keyser. On Argument Structure and the Lexical Expression of Syntactic Relations. In Ken Hale and Jay Keyser, editors, *The View From Building 20*, pages 53–109. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993.

[6] Paul Kiparsky. Remarks on Denominal Verbs. In Alex Alina, J. Bresnan, and P. Sells, editors, *Argument Structure*. Stanford: CSLI, 1997.

[7] Peter Ludlow. Cheap Contextualism. *Philosophical Issues*, 18(1):104–129, 2008.