

## DOUBLE-OBJECT VERBS IN ENGLISH

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Double-object verbs are traditionally described as those verbs which take two objects, a direct and an indirect object. The problem has always been to establish a set of rigorous grammatical criteria whereby 'directness' and 'indirectness' could be determined. The traditional grammarian was not content to rely solely on distributional criteria for establishing categories of sentence elements, but implicitly assumed a distinction between deep and surface structure. Thus the essential structural difference between sentences (1), (2) and (3) was well appreciated, in spite of their surface similarities:

- (1) She made him a cake.
- (2) She made him a good wife.
- (3) She made him her idol.

Identification of the indirect object was therefore more often made upon historical or comparative grounds, the indirect object being that nominal which was marked in Old English or in other European languages, by a dative case ending, or in Modern English by its sequential position between verb and direct object, or by marking with the preposition *to*. This set of criteria, however, still left a number of structures in which nominals meeting these syntactic requirements were nevertheless not considered to be indirect objects. The pronominal objects in sentences (4), (5) and (6), for example, were not considered to be indirect objects:

- (4) John picked her some flowers.
- (5) He envied me my success.
- (6) He waved them goodbye.

Recent work in the description of English has been little concerned with this part of syntax, indirect objects usually being designated as prepositional phrases dominated by the category of Predicate Phrase or Main Verb.

A recent study by Fillmore (Fillmore 1967) however offers a new theoretical standpoint with regard to deep structure which promises

to throw light on the resistant problem of the Double-Object sentence, and it is within this framework that the present study has been conducted.

Fillmore accepts the basic theoretical difference between deep and surface structure and proposes that the base structure of the propositional element of the sentence consists of an *unordered* array of a verb and one or more noun phrases associated with the verb in a set of differing case relationships. He states that "the 'explanatory' use of this framework resides in the necessary claim that . . . each relationship occurs only once in a simple sentence". By this means he shows that sentences may be classified into 'types' according to the differing arrays of distinct cases associated with the verb in each instance. These arrays of cases not only define the sentence types of a language but also impose a classification on the verbs of the language. It is as a means of categorizing the verbs of a language that Fillmore's proposals for a 'case grammar' are of interest in the present context.

Fillmore proposes a provisional list of some eight case categories which he names as follows, giving a note on the semantic characterization of each: Agentive (A) the case of the *animate* responsible source of the action identified by the verb; Instrumental (I) the case of the *inanimate* force or object which contributes to the action or state identified by the verb; Dative (D) the case of the *animate* being affected by the action or state identified by the verb; Objective (O) the semantically most neutral case, the case of anything representable by a noun whose role in the action or state identified by the verb is identified in the semantic interpretation of the verb itself; and Resultative (R) the case of the object or being resulting from the action identified by the verb. He also proposes at least three further case categories: Locative, Benefactive and Comitative, whose relevance to the present study is only marginal.

Accepting the necessity for differentiating between deep and surface structure, he points out that "none of the cases outlined above can be interpreted as matching the surface structure relations of 'subject' and 'object' in any particular language". Thus he suggests that *John* is Agentive in (7) as much as in (8). *The key* is Instrumental in (7) as also in (8) and (9), whilst *the door* is Objective in (7), (8), (9) and (10).

(7) John opened the door with a key.

(8) The door was opened by John with a key.

(9) The key opened the door.

(10) The door opened.

Thus, for example the Objective is sometimes realized as the 'object' of a transitive verb, the 'subject' of a passive verb or the 'subject' of

an intransitive verb. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the category of case in deep grammar and the category of 'subject', 'object' or 'indirect object' in surface structure.

In English the deep category of case may receive its surface realization in one of three ways:

(i) The sequential relationship of the Noun Phrase to the Verb.

(ii) In the case of pronouns, morphological marking of case, i.e. nominative or oblique.

(iii) Marking by a preposition.

For example, in English, the Agentive case category is normally realized as the surface 'subject', i.e. by subjectivization, as in sentence (11) or by marking with the preposition *by* as in (12):

(11) John opened the door.

(12) The door was opened *by John*.

So also the Dative case category may be realized in surface structure either by a nominal in sequential position directly after the verb as in (13) or by marking with the preposition *to* as in (14) and (15) or by subjectivization with passivization of the verb as in (16):

(13) He gave *Mary* the book.

(14) He gave the book *to Mary*.

(15) The book was given *to Mary*.

(16) *Mary* was given the book.

The Dative case category may also be realized without passivization of the verb in the case of stative verbs as in (17) or, with other categories of verbs, by various prepositional markings as in (18), (19) and (20):

(17) *Mary* believed it.

(18) He blamed his failure *on me*.

(19) He asked a favour *of me*.

(20) He withheld permission *from me*.

The Objective Case category, being semantically the most neutral one, has the widest range of differing surface realizations, particularly in respect of the selection of prepositions as in (21) — (25):

(21) They supplied me *with money*.

(22) I was thinking *of my friends*.

(23) She looked *at them*.

(24) She was looking *for her gloves*.

(25) He told me *about his plans*.

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This short sketch of the relevant concepts of 'case grammar', in which all mention of how the deep structure categories of case are mapped

transformationally onto surface structure have been omitted, provides the theoretical framework for discussion of the subcategorization of what are sometimes called the Double-Object Verbs of English. These verbs all function in the sentence type whose base component consists of the unordered array of case categories expressed in the formula:

Verb+Agentive+Dative+Objective or [V+A+D+O]

(26) — (32) is a randomly selected set of sentences which are considered to be examples having a deep structure of this type:

- (26) They served me with red wine.
- (27) They explained the problem to us.
- (28) They robbed me of my whole wardrobe.
- (29) She furnished him with a full list of all her needs.
- (30) She pardoned him for his rudeness.
- (31) He apologized to her for his rudeness.
- (32) They informed me of their intentions.

It will be noted that only (26) and (27) would have been classified traditionally as having 'indirect' objects.

It is as well however to indicate here a number of other sentence types which do not fall within the scope of this study, although their surface structure bears a resemblance to one or other of the sentences quoted above. Their exclusion rests upon the fact that they are not held to be derived from the deep structure with which we are concerned here, namely [V+A+D+O].

- (33) I picked her some flowers.
- (34) I fetched some chocolate for them.

Sentence types exemplified in (33) and (34) are excluded since they receive a deep structure analysis: Verb+Agentive+Dative+Benefactive. 'her' and 'for them' are regarded as realizations of the case category Benefactive. The need to distinguish between Dative and Benefactive in a case grammar can be seen from examples of sentences in which both categories are realized in surface structure, as in (35):

- (35) Give Mary these flowers for me!

All sentence types containing 'stative' verbs are excluded from this study, since amongst the syntactic features of the 'stative' verb is its non-occurrence with the Agentive case category. Thus we must exclude sentences like (36) and (37), which may traditionally sometimes have been regarded as examples of double-object sentences. The Surface subject is here regarded as a realization of the deep case category of Dative:

- (36) They envied me my success.
- (37) She loved him for his kindness.

Furthermore the surface 'objects' in these sentences are regarded as realizations of the deep categories Objective and Source. Consequently the deep structure assigned to this sentence type would be: Verb+Dative+Objective+Source:

- (38) He believes that they will come.
- (39) I suppose it is possible.
- (40) She considers him a fool.

The sentence types exemplified in (38) — (40) also show the Dative case category realized as surface subject, but here the Objective category is realized by an embedded sentence. Following Fillmore these sentences would receive the analysis: Verb+Dative+S (where S is the symbol for a recursive sentence embedded in O).

More obviously we are excluding sentences exemplified by (41) and (42), in which the case category of deep structure realized by an embedded sentence is Resultative and not Objective. Such sentences would receive the following deep structure analysis: Verb+Agentive+Objective+Resultative:

- (41) He painted the wall red.
- (42) They elected him chairman.

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So far we have proposed a category of the verb which we have called the Double-Object verb, which was defined as fitting what Fillmore calls the 'case frame': [----+A+D+O]. This category may be further subcategorized. The criteria for such further subcategorization are the following transformational properties of these verbs.

1. *The Deletability by transformation of one or more deep case categories in surface realization*

Certain double-object verbs permit the deletion by transformation of either the category of Dative or Objective or both in surface realization.

a) *Transformational deletion of Dative Case Element*

Verbs of the subcategory exemplified by *cause* and *explain* permit deletion only of the Dative case element in surface structure; hence the grammaticality of (43) — (46) and the ungrammaticality of (47) and (48):

- (43) He caused me a lot of trouble.
- (44) He caused a lot of trouble.
- (45) I explained the matter to him.
- (46) I explained the matter.
- \* (47) He caused me.
- \* (48) I explained to him.

b) *Transformational deletion of Objective case element*

Verbs of the subcategory exemplified by *question* and *remind* permit the deletion only of the Objective Case element hence the grammaticality of (49) — (52) and the ungrammaticality of (53) and (54):

(49) He questioned me about my intentions.

(50) He reminded me of my promise.

(51) He questioned me.

(52) He reminded me.

\* (53) He questioned about my intentions.

\* (54) He reminded of my promise.

c) *Transformational deletion of either Objective or Dative case elements or both*

A further subcategory exemplified by *teach* and *talk* permits transformational deletion of either Dative or Objective case elements or both. Hence we may have:

(55) He taught me physics.

(56) He taught physics.

(57) He taught me.

(58) He taught there for seven years.

d) *No transformational deletions permitted*

Finally there is a subcategory of double-object verbs which permits no transformational deletions of Dative or Objective case elements. Examples of this category are *confer* and *bestow*, where such sentences as (60) and (61) are ungrammatical:

(59) He conferred a benefit upon them.

\* (60) He conferred a benefit.

\* (61) He conferred on them.

2. *Subjectivization of Dative and Objective Case elements*

The second criterion for subcategorization of double-object verbs is the familiar one of the possibility of passive transformation of the sentence, or, in the terms here used, the subjectivizability of the Dative and/or Objective case elements. Thus verbs of the subcategory exemplified by *give*, *cause*, *sell* permit both Dative and Objective case elements to be realized as surface subjects. In such cases the transformation is 'registered', as Fillmore puts it, by passivization of the verb. We may note that subjectivization of Dative and Objective case elements in the case of double-object verbs always requires passivization of the verb, though this is not necessarily true of other categories of verb (see example (36) and (10) above). Note also that this transformation permits the optional deletion of the Agentive case element as in (63) and (64):

(62) He gave me a book. (agentive subject)

(63) I was given a book (by him) (dative subject)

(64) A book was given me (by him) (objective subject)

Verbs of the subcategory exemplified by *explain*, *describe* and *reveal* on the other hand permit surface realization as subject only of the Objective element:

(65) He explained the problem to me.

(66) The problem was explained to me.

\* (67) I was explained the problem.

Verbs of the subcategory exemplified by *inform*, *warn* and *suspect* permit surface realization as subject only of the Dative element:

(68) He informed me of her intentions.

(69) I was informed of her intentions.

\* (70) Her intentions were informed me.

3. *Prepositional marking of Case categories*

The third criterion for subcategorizing the double-object verb is the choice of preposition to mark the surface realization of the category, the preposition normally being deleted for all case elements realized as surface subjects.

We must categorize differently therefore *give*, *learn* and *serve* on the one hand and *reveal*, *speak* and *confer* on the other, since the Dative may be realized either sequentially or by marking with *to*, as in (71) and (72), in the first case but only by marking with *to* in the second, as in (73). Hence the ungrammaticality of (74):

(71) He gave me a book.

(72) He gave the book to me.

(73) He revealed his secrets to me.

\* (74) He revealed me his secrets.

We must also distinguish between the verb categories exemplified by *explain*, *reveal*, *describe* and *require*, *demand*, *beg* on account of the specific preposition selected by the verb for the realization of the Dative in each instance:

(75) (revealed )

He (explained) his plans *to* me.

(described)

(76) (required )

He (demanded) an explanation *from* me.

(begged )

Other prepositions realizing the Dative case category in double-object sentences are *of* and *with*<sup>1</sup> as in (77) and (78):

<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with the prepositional realization of the Comitative case as in *He argued with me* which permits the alternative realization *He and*

(77) He stole my money *from* me.

(78) He pleaded *with* me for more time.

#### 4. Recursive sentences in Objective Case Category

Recursive sentences may be embedded on the Objective case, and also, as we have seen, on the Resultative case, and probably on other case categories, e.g. Source. This syntactic feature of the verb offers another criterion for the subcategorization of double-object verbs. Thus it is necessary to subcategorize differently *speaking* and *saying*, since *speaking* does not permit the Objective case to be realized by an embedded sentence, whilst *saying* does, hence the grammaticality of (79) and (80) and the ungrammaticality of (81) and (82):

(79) He is speaking the truth to you.

(80) He is saying to you that he will come.

\* (81) He is saying the truth to you.

\* (82) He is speaking that he will come.

Verbs which permit an embedded sentence on the Objective case element may be further subcategorized according to the choice of the particular complementizer for the embedded sentence. Thus it is necessary to subcategorize differently verbs which permit embedded sentences on the Objective case which have a "that" complementizer, an 'ing' complementizer, a 'to' complementizer and full 'deverbal' complementization. Each of these is exemplified in (83) — (86):

(83) We were informed *that they were coming*.

(84) They dissuaded him *from leaving*.

(85) Remind him *to turn off the light*.

(86) They excused us *our late arrival*.

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To summarize, then, we have four syntactic criteria for the subcategorization of double-object verbs, as defined by the case frame [---- + A + O + D].

1. Transformational deletion of Dative or Objective case elements, or neither, or both.
2. Subjectivizability of Dative or Objective case categories, or neither, or both.
3. Prepositional marking of Objective and Dative case categories.
4. Possibility of an embedded sentence on Objective case category, and choice of complementizer.

Two points remain to be made. The sets of syntactic criteria listed

*I argued.* This is a characteristic of that verb category in which "reciprocality" is a semantic feature.

above are regarded as independent in the sense that there is no hierarchical organization amongst them. Thus, for instance there is no evidence that Deletable Dative elements are specifically those which are positionally marked in surface structure, or that subjectivizable Objective elements are normally deletable. There is some evidence that, in the case of double-object verbs, positionally marked Dative and Objective case elements are not subjectivizable, but this certainly is not a general rule in the language for all verbs, as can be seen from examples (87) and (88):

(87) They looked at the picture.

(88) The picture was looked at.

Thus we have in the case of one subcategory of double-object verbs such examples as (90) and (91) whose grammatical status is perhaps uncertain:

(89) Mary apologized to him for her rudeness.

(90) Her rudeness was apologized for.

(91) He was apologized to for her rudeness.

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Appended below is a list of some of the double-object verbs of English, categorized according to the criteria discussed above. The syntactic features are presented in the form in which a dictionary entry for any representative verb of that category might be cast.

General rules are of course omitted from dictionary entries. The general rules which are relevant to double-object verbs are these:

- (a) Surface subjects of active verbs are always unmarked by prepositions;
- (b) When the Agentive case category is realized as subject it is always with active verb form;
- (c) When Dative or Objective case categories are realized as surface subjects the Agentive (where present) is marked by the preposition *by* and is optionally deletable; and
- (d) When Dative and Objective case categories are realized as surface subjects the fact is registered in the verb by passivization.

\* \*  
\* \*  
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The relevant syntactic information for establishing a subcategory of a double-object verb is presented in the following form:

*Demand:* [---- + A + D + O]

Dative: deletable

preposition: *from* in the env. [+ O]

*of* in the env. [+ S]

Objective: subjectivizable  
 preposition: zero  
 S: complementizer: that  
 nom

This means that *demand* has the following syntactic features:

- a) It fits the 'case frame' [- - - + A + D + O] (this information will be omitted in the list below since it is a definition of 'double-object' verbs).
- b) The Dative case category is transformationally deletable.
- c) The Dative case category is prepositionally marked by *from* when the Objective case is realized by a Noun Phrase.
- d) The Dative case category is prepositionally marked by *of* when there is an embedded sentence on the Objective case.
- e) The Objective case category may be realized as surface subject.
- f) The Objective case category is prepositionally unmarked in surface structure.
- g) Embedded sentences on the Objective case are transformationally complementized by 'that' and 'full deverbal nominalization'.

Such a dictionary entry would account for the occurrence of (92) — (98) and the non-occurrence of (99) — (103):

- (92) He demanded a lot of money (from me).
- (93) A lot of money was demanded (from me).
- (94) A lot of money was demanded from me (by him).
- (95) He demanded (of me) that I answer.
- (96) He demanded (of me) an answer.
- (97) That I answer was demanded (of me) (by him).
- (98) An answer was demanded (of me) (by him).

- \* (99) He demanded.
- \* (100) He demanded of me.
- \* (101) I was demanded an answer.
- \* (102) He demanded my answering.
- \* (103) He demanded of me to answer.

One last point; we have been discussing categories of double-object verbs and illustrating them by selecting lexical representatives of each category. It is, of course, a typical feature of English, as of many other languages, that particular lexical verbs are members of more than one category. It is no surprise therefore to find that this is true of various double-object verbs. Thus we find, for example that the lexical items *ask*, *require* and *tell* are each exponents of three double-object verb categories.

#### CATEGORIES OF DOUBLE-OBJECT VERBS

1. D: subjectivizable  
 preposition: *to* in environment [O + - - -]  
*zero* in environment [- - - + O]

O: subjectivizable  
 preposition: zero

accord, afford, allow, bequeath, bear, bring, cause, concede, deny, feed, give, grant, grudge, hire, leave, lease, lend, make, offer, pass, pay, read, recommend, refuse, rent, return, serve, show, send, take, teach, tell, write, wish.

*Example:* They brought us some tea, They brought the tea to us.

2. D: subjectivizable  
 preposition: zero

O: S: complementizer: *to*

allow, advise, ask, beg, command, entreat, expect, forbid, order, permit, persuade, recommend, require, request, teach.

*Example:* I entreat you to reconsider your decision.

3. D: deletable  
 preposition: *to*
- O: subjectivizable  
 preposition: zero

administer, attribute, dedicate, describe, devote, distribute, donate, entrust, explain, express, furnish, introduce, provide, preach, speak, supply.

*Example:* They explained the situation to us.

4. D: deletable  
 preposition: *to*
- O: subjectivizable  
 S: complementizer: *that*

admit, confess, confide, convey, communicate, declare, demonstrate, deny, disclose, divulge, explain, hint, indicate, mention, proclaim, propose, prove, repeat, report, reveal, say, show, submit, suggest.

*Example:* He declared to us that he would do so.

5. D: subjectivizable  
 preposition: zero
- O: preposition: *with*

acquaint, credit, endow, entrust, favour, furnish, invest, provide, regale, supply.

*Example:* She entrusted him with her secrets.

6. D: deletable  
 preposition: *of*

O: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

S: complementizer: that  
nom

ask, beg, crave, demand, expect, request, require, seek.

*Example:* I beg of you that you reconsider your decision.

7. D: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

O: deletable

preposition: of

cheat, rob, strip.

*Example:* I cheated him (of his winnings).

8. D: subjectivizable

preposition: of

O: preposition: of

defraud, deprive, divest, relieve.

*Example:* They relieved us of our fears.

9. D: deletable

preposition: from

O: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

ask, beg, borrow, cadge, claim, crave, demand, enquire, exact, extort,  
pinch, require, request, seek, steal, withhold.

*Example:* They begged a favour from us.

10. D: subjectivizable

deletable

preposition: zero

O: deletable

subjectivizable

preposition: for (deletable)

S: complementizer: ing

nom

excuse, forgive, pardon.

*Example:* She forgave me for arriving so late.

11. D: deletable

preposition: to

subjectivizable (?)

O: deletable

subjectivizable (?)

preposition: for

S: complementizer: ing

nom

account, answer, apologize.

*Example:* You must account to him for your expenditure.

12. D: deletable

preposition: on

O: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

bestow, confer, impose, place.

*Example:* He imposed intolerable conditions on us.

13. D: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

O: preposition: of in env. [+ S 'ing' and 'nom'] and N. P.  
zero in env. [+ S 'that']

S: complementizer: that

ing

nom

advise, aprise, convince, inform, persuade, warn, tell.

*Examples:* He convinced me of his sincerity. He warned me of their  
arrival. They convinced us that it was unwise.

14. D: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

O: deletable

preposition: of

S: complementizer: ing

nom

accuse, suspect.

*Example:* The police suspected him of breaking in.

15. D: subjectivizable

preposition: zero

O: deletable

preposition: about

S: complementizer: ing

nom

advise, ask, grill, interrogate, question, tell, teach.

*Example:* They interrogated him about his activities.

16. D: subjectivizable (?)

deletable

preposition: to

O: deletable  
 subjectivizable (?)  
 preposition: *of* and *about*  
 S: complementizer: *ing*  
                   *nom*

complain, speak, talk.

*Example:* She complained to him about their absence.

17. D: subjectivizable  
       preposition: *zero*  
 O: deletable  
       preposition: *from*  
 S: complementizer: *ing*  
                   *nom*

discourage, dissuade, hinder, keep, preserve, prevent, restrain, save,  
 warn.

*Example:* He discouraged us from keeping pets.

18. D: subjectivizable (?)  
       deletable  
       preposition: *with*  
 O: deletable  
 S: complementizer: *to*

plead.

*Example:* They pleaded with us to leave them alone.

#### REFERENCE

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