

CONNECTIVITY AND INDIRECT CONNECTION IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Two semantic notions are defined and illustrated: *connectivity*, which is the optional insertion of the semantic element 'part' to expand a noun on which it leans, and *indirect connection*, which is a connection of a noun on the one hand and an adjective or a verb on the other with certain semantic material added. This is an effect of the extension of a noun slot within an adjectival or verbal definition, where definition virtually stands for a representation of mental storage of a lexeme (or morpheme) as a part of language system.

Motivation suggests itself in both cases; if a noun means 'part', it behaves as a semantically (although not necessarily grammatically) dependent part of a noun phrase. If a connection between an adjective and a noun is indirect, it has to be attributive unless the adjective contains elements having to do notionally with strength ('strong' or 'not strong'). Indirect connection is too weak to back up a predicative use, but if it is reinforced by the notion of strength, then it permits of it.

1. Connectivity

The term *connectivity* will be used to refer to the phenomenon occurring when a noun which contains the semantic element 'part' intervenes between two words which could also collocate directly. Thus we have

1) *He fulfilled the set of requirements.*

where *fulfill* and *requirement* could be combined directly (as in *fulfill requirements*, *requirements are fulfilled*, *fulfillment of requirements*), while *set* (as well as *of*) contains the semantic element 'part' intervening between *fulfill* and *requirement* to add information on the scope of requirements. The noun *set* is grammatically the head of the noun phrase *the set of requirements*, but semantically it can be interpreted as an extension of the noun *requirement*, which is semantically more important and carries more information than *set*.

Another subtype of connectivity can be found in collocations with nouns denoting some category, like *type*, *kind*, *nuance*, *nature*, *stature*. These nouns can also be reduced to the element 'part'. Thus, *deep*, which may be combined with the noun *thinker*, can be separated from that noun by the noun *type* (as *deep type of thinker*), while the semantic connection with *thinker* remains. Other examples are:

2) *I don't like blatant types of misleading advertisements.*

which can be changed to *blatantly misleading advertisements*, the difference being in treating the element 'blatant' in the form *blatantly* as a degree of 'misleading' rather than viewing it as a classifying element for misleading advertisements (as in *blatant types*). Let us take another example:

3) *I prefer literature of a more cheerful nature.*

Referentially nothing is lost if (3) is paraphrased as

3a) *I prefer more cheerful literature.*

Similarly, *a greyish shade of yellow* is referentially the same as *greyish yellow*, for the reasons stated, because 'shade of yellow' = 'kind of yellow' = 'part of all possible manifestations of yellow'. In yet another example:

4) *He was a gentleman of high stature.*

*stature* is an inherent part of a person, and the sentence could be paraphrased as

4a) *He was a tall gentleman.*

The adjectives *high* and *tall* are in suppletive relation, the former being used with the abstract noun, and the latter with a (pro)noun referring to a person.

Connectivity is also effected by means of the so-called 'unit nouns', like *piece*, *bit*, *drop*, which are used "to turn lumps of mass into units" (Broughton 1990: 183). For instance, *a piece of coal/poetry/advice/news*, *a bit of cloth/fun/expenditure*, *a drop of oil*, *a strand of hair*, *a glimmer of hope*.

The phenomenon observed here seems to be an instance of semantic motivation: if the noun means 'part', then it behaves as a semantically dependent part of a noun phrase. Namely, in the examples above *set of requirements* amounts to 'part of all requirements', *type of advertisements* boils down to 'part of all advertisements', *literature of cheerful nature* is a 'cheerful part of all literature', while the verb (*fulfill*) and the adjectives (*blatant* and *cheerful*) are semantically connected with the nouns removed (*requirements*, *advertisements* and *literature* respectively) rather than with the neighbouring nouns (*set*, *type*, *nature*).

The preposition *of*, which has a general meaning of 'part' is used after a noun which contains the element 'part' and before a noun which refers to the whole range of possible referents (e.g. *a type of wine*), while it is used after a noun which refers to a specific entity and before a noun containing the element 'part' (e.g., *the wine of an excellent type*). The difference lies in shifting functional focus from the noun meaning 'part' to the noun referring to the whole; either the former or the latter becomes the head of a noun phrase.

## 2. Indirect connection

In the indirect connection of an adjective and a noun there is an extension of the collocating noun. E.g., the adjective *cheerful* can be defined as '#sb# in good spirits, which shows', where #sb# stands for the collocating noun and is called *directive* (Wiggins 1971: 26). If we want the definition to accommodate collocations such as *cheerful flat* we have to add 'flat causing' before #sb# because it is not a flat that is in good spirits, but somebody, i.e. a person. So, in fact, #flat causing# is connected to 'in good spirits' through #sb#.

The extension may be:

- a) 'event caused by' followed by 'sb' as the head element: *cautious sensitivity* '#(sensitivity caused by) sb# cautious', *irresponsible charm* '#(charm caused by) sb# irresponsible', *cowardly withdrawal* '#(withdrawal caused by) sb# cowardly', *conservative ideas* '#(ideas caused by) sb# conservative', *considerate act/attitude* '#(act/attitude caused by) sb# considerate', *corrupt morals/practices* '#(morals/practices caused by) sb# corrupt', *furious shout* '#(shout caused by) sb# furious', *happy marriage* '#(marriage caused by) sb# happy', *hopeful cry/smile* '#(cry/smile caused by) sb# full of hope';
- b) 'event causing' followed by 'sb' within a directive, as in *happy ending* (i.e. '#(ending causing) sb# happy'), *gloomy story* '#(story causing) sb# gloomy', *joyful occasion* '#(occasion causing) sb# joyful', *hopeful letter/message/book/art/story/news* '#(letter/message, etc. causing) sb# hopeful', *thirsty work/sun/meeting* '#(work/sun/meeting causing) sb# thirsty', *sincere answer* '#(sb1's answer causing sb2 to think that) sb1# is sincere', *sad face* '#(sb1's face causing sb2 to think that) sb1# is sad';
- c) 'event when sb uses' followed by 'thing', as in *woollen trade* '#(event of trade when sb uses) things# which are woollen';
- d) 'something used for' followed by 'thing', as in *double room* '#(room used for placing) beds# two').

Indirect connection normally leads to the restriction of the adjective to the attributive position. However, if the adjective contains elements 'strong' or 'not

strong' in the main part of definition, the restriction to the attributive position does not hold. Thus,

*fast* '#(surface causing) sb moving# fast (= strong in speed)':

*fast road/lane ~ the grass courts at Wimbledon are much faster* (COBUILD)

*ingenious* '#(idea caused by) sb# very strong in mind':

*ingenious solution ~ the solution is ingenious*

*slow* '#(surface causing) sb moving# slow (= 'not strong in speed)':

*slow road ~ long grass makes the field slower* (OALD)

*superior* '#(body event caused by) sb# who shows that he/she thinks that he/she is stronger in some respect than others':

*superior smile ~ his smile was superior*

*surlly* '#(body or mental event caused by) sb1# who has a bad and strong feeling and is cold towards sb2':

*surlly look ~ her look was surlly*

*long* '#(strong thought used for thinking about) an event# which takes long time to happen in the future':

*long thought ~ the thoughts of youth are long*

*cheerful* '#(sth causing) sb# cheerful':

*cheerful news ~ the news isn't very cheerful*

On the other hand, if the extension of the directive is doubled, connection has to be attributive, even though 'strong' and 'not strong' may be present.

*long dance ~ \*the dance was long* ('#((dance) which is caused by) a group of people that form a line which is) long'

*fast food ~ \*the food was fast* ('#((food) eaten by sb in) event# fast (= strong in speed)'

*weak moment ~ \*the moment is weak* ('#((time of) event caused by) sb# not strong'

One and the same lexeme may have sememes with indirect connection but with different restrictions to the position of the adjective. E.g. the adjective *thorough* meaning 'complete' (and usually 'bad') with the directive 'event' has an extension 'sb causing', which leads to its attributive use in *a thorough nuisance*, whereas the meaning 'complete and good and strong' and the extension 'sb causing' allow both an attributive and a predicative kind of connection, as in *a thorough study ~ this study is thorough*.

Even if there are conditions for a restriction leading (mainly) to the predicative position, an adjective with indirect connection becomes attributive-only, as in *speechless*. Thus, although *he was speechless* is much more natural than a

*speechless man*, only *speechless rage/horror/fury/wonder* is acceptable, unlike *\*rage/horror/fury/wonder was speechless*.

It can be noticed that (a) and (b) are varieties of the same situation with a causer and an event caused, while (c) and (d) are variants of another situation with a thing used. So the common meanings for such extensions are 'causation' and 'usage'. This is something to be expected as causation is a notion inherent to people<sup>1</sup> and strong things, whereas usage is a most conspicuous characteristic attributed to things.<sup>2</sup> The strength of the notions 'cause' and 'use' seems to be the strength that enables a strong connection between the extension and the extended part of a directive in English.

Apparently, the distance between a noun and an adjective that is added when an adjective is used predicatively accounts for the tendency to use indirect connections only attributively. As if the impulse sent from an adjective to its collocating noun would be lost in the case of predicative use.

Complementary, adjectives which contain no extension of the directive such as could lead to indirect connections (like *blond*, *tall*) tend to be combined with nouns which are without the element 'used' (animal, person). Therefore it is normal to have 'a tall person' or 'That person is tall'.

- e) There are also adjectives which contain a directive head which denotes event or something abstract rather than an entity. They enter into a special kind of indirect connection, like *perfect stranger* '#(sb1 causing impression with sb2 that sb1 is) strange# perfectly', or *successful footballer*, which is '#(sb causing) playing football# successfully', where directive heads are 'strange' and 'playing football'. Other examples are: *loud pipe/wave/canon* '#(pipe/wave/canon causing) noise# loud', *an occasional cup of tea* '#(cup used for) drinking# occasionally'; *potential rivals* '#(rivals causing) opposition# potential', *great dancer* '#(sb causing) dancing# very very well', *hard worker* '#(sb causing) working# hard', *big eater* '#(sb causing) eating# much', *big publisher* '#(sb causing) publishing# much', *excellent pianist* '#(sb causing) playing the piano# excellently', *high achiever* '#(sb causing) achieving# much', *early riser* '#(sb causing) rising# early', *former friend* '#(sb1 whom sb2 knows and likes, but who is not a relation, causing good behaviour towards sb2) in time# former', where *is* has to be changed into *was* and the predicative use like *years were former* must be disallowed. In addition to this, evaluative adjectives (*good*, *strong*, *weak* with the extension 'event' tend to be used with nouns which contain the element 'used'

<sup>1</sup> Typical agents (causers) are people.

<sup>2</sup> \**confident knife*, \**hopeful stone*, \**gloomy shoes*, \**joyful mousetraps* because there is no causing confidence when typically using a knife, nor is a stone used for any typical function; shoes and mousetraps are not used to cause a feeling.

(*king, mother, milkman*), as in *weak king* 'king who rules weakly', *good milkman* 'milkman who does his duty well' (cf. Vendler 197: 93).<sup>3</sup>

In the long run, it is irrelevant whether an adjective or an adverb is used in definitions, since parts of speech exist to help identify connections between words, while general semantic classes are notions like 'entity' and 'event', or, as usually with adjectives and adverbs, 'characteristic', and only they can be important in semantic definitions. For this reason adjectives and adverbs alternate, as in sentence (2) and its paraphrase.

All the cases mentioned above, i.e., (a) to (e) produce loose collocations of a noun and an adjective, so that there is always a possibility for another adjective to come between. For example, *a happy longlasting marriage or woollen and silken trade*. In the following instances this cannot occur, although the same principle of indirect connection seems to be at work. The extension to the directive here is

- f) added to '#place# far from a reference point', as in *long hole* ('#(golf hole which is at) a place# which is) at a long distance from tree to green' or *long call* ('#(telephone call which is realized from) a place# which is) at a long distance';
- g) added to '#event# lasting long', as in *long mark* '#(typographical mark which stands for) a sound# lasting long' or *long timer* '#(prisoner who has got) a sentence# lasting long' or *long ship* '#(ship in which) time between drinks# lasts long'.

The main difference between (a) to (e) on the one hand and (f) and (g) on the other hand appears to be in the content of extensions. While the former contain elements 'cause' and 'use' which are very general and ubiquitous, the latter are

<sup>3</sup> Hornby (1951: 101) mentions adjectives like *big, great, small, early, late, perfect*, which are used adverbially to indicate degree, "always with nouns in -er formed from verbs". Among intensifying adjectives Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 122-3) distinguish between emphasizees, like *certain* ('sure') *winner, an outright lie, pure* ('sheer') *fabrication, a real* ('undoubted') *hero*, and amplifiers. The latter can be inherent, (when they can be used predicatively, as *a complete victory ~ the victory was complete, their extreme condemnation ~ their condemnation was extreme, his great folly ~ his folly was great*) or non-inherent (when they are attributive only, as in *a complete fool, a close friend, utter folly, the very end, a great supporter, a great/big baby* ('very babyish'), *a great/\*big friend*). Inherent emphasizees correspond to our situation of adjectives used in an indirect connection with a directive containing the element 'event'. Levi (1973: 332) calls such adjectives nonpredicate and deadverbial, with examples like *her eventual husband, a joint undertaking, an occasional visitor, the main reason, a principal cause*. Broughton (1990: 52-53) labels such adjectives noninherent (examples include *a heavy/modest drinker, the present/late chairman*). Although for practical reasons these adjectives might be given a special name, it is more illuminating not to do so because it is not the adjectives that are different themselves but rather the connection between them and the collocating nouns.

rather specific. Since the latter are in fact the cases of what is traditionally known as compounds, it can be concluded that extensions in compounds are specific, culture bound and for their interpretation require familiarity with the outside world, while extensions in collocations contain general and universal elements 'cause' and 'use'.

Leech includes examples (similar to) (4) to (7) among cases of metonymic semantic transfer (Leech 1990: 217-219). His interpretation of this phenomenon reflects process rather than system. Our account is intended to capture what is in the system.

This is the reason why the following sentences are synonymous:

- 5a) *He is a good skier.*  
 5b) *He is good at skiing.*  
 5c) *He skis and the action is done well.*

Sentence (5b) shows more clearly that the adjective is in more direct connection with the action than with the subject, and sentence (5c) is even more explicit in this respect.

The account above rests on the notion that there are basic collocations of a noun and an adjective, in which the adjective is joined to the noun without extension. The semantic content of adjectives in basic collocations make the core of a language and they are mastered first in language acquisition and are also intuitively taught first in foreign language teaching. Referring to some of the examples above, basic collocations are *occasional visit, joyful boy, furious man, superior boss, cowardly person, weak human, perfect strangeness, hard work, woolen sweater, fast ride, fast eating*.

A similar phenomenon is found in other verbs; their subject or object directive 'thing' can be expanded with the element 'caused by sb', with which element the analysis can be indirectly linked. For example,

- 7) *He stole a Picasso.*  
 8) *She enjoys Shakespeare.*  
 9) *Chopin sounds better in his interpretation.*

An incomplete definition of *steal* might read like this: '#person# take #thing (made by a famous author)# ...', of *enjoy* '#person# feel pleasure when #doing sth with a thing (made by sb famous)#', and of *sound* '#sounds (caused by sb)# be ...'.

A similar thing occurs in:

- 10) *Nothing like it has happened since Napoleon.*

where the noun *time*, filling the slot in a prepositional phrase has to be semantically expanded with '(when sb famous lives)' to make the sentence meaningful.

In verb directives expansions follow the head part, unlike adjective directives.

Leech includes examples (similar to) (7) to (10) into cases of metonymic semantic transfer (Leech 1990: 217-219). His interpretation of this phenomenon reflects the process by which the meaning of the thing is transferred to the name of its creator. Our account is intended to capture what is in the lexical definition, i.e., in the system, in which the directive 'thing' is expanded with 'caused by'. In other words, the article takes a fresh look at metonymy and compounding.

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