

What Does *Remind* Remind Us of?

—It Reminds Us of Semifactive Predicates—

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Since Postal (1970), the verb *remind* has received considerable attention. Much of the discussion has focused on *remind* sentences of the form "NP V NP of NP," as illustrated in (1).

- (1) This reminds me of Christmas parties. (COBUILD²)

This verb may also occur in other sentence patterns. For example, it takes an object followed by either a *wh*-clause or *that* clause:

- (2) She reminds me that I hadn't written to Mother. (LDOCE²)
(3) Need I remind you who the enemy is? (COBUILD²)

In this joint research, we deal with sentences like (2) and (3). A careful examination reveals that the verb *remind* belongs to the semifactive predicate. This is borne out by the syntactic facts to be discussed below.

The sentential complement of *remind* seems to be assertive, in the sense of Hooper (1975). As Hooper points out, the assertive complement can be preposed in the sentence-initial position. Thus, the verb *discover* allows its complement to be fronted:

- (4) It was difficult to make ends meet, they discovered. (Hooper, 1975)

Similarly, the complement of *remind* can be placed sentence-initially:

- (5) I hadn't written to Mother, she reminded me.

Moreover, the order of the subject and the participle can be inverted in the assertive complement. This kind of inversion can also be observed in the semifactive complement:

- (6) I discovered that standing among the spectators was the former champion himself.

(Hooper, 1975)

The same thing holds true for the complement of *remind*, which lends support to the claim that this verb is a semifactive predicate:

- (7) It shouldn't take a madman to remind the world that stumbling toward disaster are Israel and the Palestinians. (TIME)

Assertive predicates (e.g. *think* and *claim*) do not take a *wh*-clause. By contrast, *remind* can occur with a *wh*-clause as well as a *that* clause. In this respect, *remind* is different from assertive predicates.

As Grimshaw (1979) argues, *wh*-complements are divided into two types: exclamatives and interrogatives. The intensifier *very* is limited to exclamatives and *whether* to interrogatives.

Semifactive predicates, according to Grimshaw, are followed by both types of *wh*-complement:

- (8) Fred found out how very fast John can run.
- (9) John found out whether he lives in a large house.

Similarly, both exclamative and interrogative occur with the verb *remind*.

- (10) He reminded me how very important this vote is to our country.
- (11) My boss reminded me which men the President assigned to which position.

In this respect, *remind* can be classified into the semifactive predicate. Note that predicates which take a *wh*-clause do not necessarily occur with both of these complement types: a verb like *wonder* is compatible only with an interrogative complement and a predicate like *is amazing* is compatible only with an exclamatory complement (Grimshaw (1979)).

References

- Grimshaw, Jane (1979) "Complement Selection and the Lexicon," *Linguistic Inquiry* 10, 279-326.
- Hooper, Joan B. (1975) "On Assertive Predicates," *Syntax and Semantics* 4, ed. by John Kimball, 91-124, Academic Press, New York.
- Postal, Paul (1970) "On the Surface Verb 'Remind'," *Linguistic Inquiry* 1, 37-120.