

## Arguments against the Larsonian Approach to Verbs of Giving

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Arguments against the Larsonian Approach to  
Verbs of Giving

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It has been widely assumed that the syntactic structure of a sentence is determined for the most part by the argument structure of the verb which functions as the head of the sentence. In the Government and Binding Theory, in particular, this is embodied in the Projection Principle and the Theta Criterion, and most, if not all, of the analyses proposed in recent studies crucially depend on these theoretical constructs.

Baker (1988) puts this assumption forward and argues for the strict correspondence in configuration between the argument structure and D-structure: "The identical thematic relationships between items are represented by identical structural relationships between those items at the level of D-structure" (p. 46). This is what Baker calls the Uniformity of Theta Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH). According to this hypothesis, two different sentences which involve the same argument structure must be assigned the same D-structure.

Similarly, Larson (1988) proposes an analysis in which the double object constructions (e.g., *John gave Mary a book*) and the dative constructions (e.g., *John gave a book to Mary*) are derived from the same D-structure, which is reminiscent of the rule Dative Shift. In this study, the verb *give* is assumed to have the argument structure [Agent [Theme [Goal]]]; thematic roles are hierarchically ordered.<sup>1</sup> It is also assumed that each of these arguments is projected into an NP in a syntactic position at D-structure, preserving its hierarchical relations to other arguments. Thus, the D-structure representations of sentences with *give* are invariably of the form (1a), which is essentially the structure for the dative construction. And the double object construction is derived from (1a) by some rules, as in (1b).

- (1)a. [NP<sub>1</sub> give [NP<sub>2</sub> [to NP<sub>3</sub>]]]  
 b. [NP<sub>1</sub> give [NP<sub>3</sub> [NP<sub>2</sub> [t<sub>3</sub>]]]]

Here, NP<sub>1</sub> corresponds to Agent, NP<sub>2</sub> Theme, and to NP<sub>3</sub>, Goal.

Larson's analysis of the relationship between the double object constructions and the dative constructions, however, poses a problem: How does it cope with the so-called multiple thematic roles? Notice that NPs do not always bear one thematic role; they are often associated with two or more thematic roles (cf. Jackendoff, 1990). For example, *John* in the sentence *John gave a book to Mary* is not only the Agent who caused the change in possession of a book, but also the Source of the transferred book. The UTAH (and for that matter, the traditional Theta Criterion) cannot deal with this fact, as it stands.

Larson's analysis is applied in Zushi (1992) to the syntax of the Japanese verbs of giving *yar-* and *kure-*.<sup>2</sup> These verbs are known to function not only as ditransitive verbs but also as auxiliary verbs which select as the complement a clause which is headed by the *-te* form of a verb:

- (2)a. Taroo-wa Hanako-ni hon-o yat-ta.  
           Top          Dat book-Acc give-Past  
       'Taro gave Hanako a book.'
- b. Taroo<sub>i</sub>-wa Hanako-ni [e<sub>i</sub> hon-o yon-de] yat-ta.  
           Top          Dat      book-Acc read-Asp give-Past  
       'Taro read Hanako a book.'

Note that in the *-te yar-* construction like (2b), the subject of the embedded clause is understood to be coreferential with the subject of the main clause.

The two functions of these verbs have usually been accounted for in Japanese syntax by assuming that the Theme argument is specified in their lexical entries as corresponding to either an NP or a *-te* clause (cf. Martin, 1975). Using this assumption, Zushi tries to make clear the reason why *Taroo* is an understood subject of the verb *yom-* 'to read' in (2b), within the Larsonian framework. Since Theme is higher than Goal in the argument

structure, the embedded clause in (2b) is placed in the position higher than the position for the dative NP at D-structure, as represented in (3).

(3) Taroo<sub>1</sub>-ga [[e<sub>1</sub> hon-o yon-de] [Hanako-ni yat-ta]]

If the coreferentiality of these two subjects is defined by the minimal c-command relation between them at D-structure, (3) will make a correct prediction.<sup>9</sup> *Taroo* is an element in the position closest to *e*, and c-commands it, at D-structure.

However, this analysis raises a question as to sentences like (4):

(4) Butyoo-wa Hanako<sub>1</sub>-ni [e<sub>1</sub> Oosaka-ni  
 chief-Top                    Dat                    Dat  
 syuttoosu-ru    koto-o]    meireisi-ta.  
 make a business trip-Pres event-Acc order-Past  
 'The chief sent Hanako to Osaka.'

The verb *meireis-* 'to order' can be classified into the same class as verbs of giving (cf. Teramura, 1982). This verb is also known to be able to have as the complement a clause instead of an NP, just as in the case where *yar-* is used as an auxiliary. So the question is why the subject of the embedded clause in (4) is bound to the dative object, not to the subject of the main clause. (4) should have the D-structure of the same form as (3) does, in the Larsonian framework; moreover, the embedded subject in (4) should subject to the same rule as that in (3) does. But this erroneously predicts the coreferentiality of the main and embedded subjects in (4).

We have shown that the Larsonian approach to the English and Japanese verbs of giving is problematic. However, we are not in a position to propose an alternative for the present. The main point here is to bring to our attention the fact that there are a number of linguistic phenomena yet to be accounted for in the Larsonian analyses.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In Larson the argument structure is not assumed to be a structured list of thematic roles, but it is assumed to be governed by the thematic hierarchy.

<sup>2</sup> The verb *moraw-* 'to get' is also taken up in Zushi. In this short squib, however, we concentrate only on the verbs of giving, that is, *yar-* and *kure-*. It seems that *yar-* and *kure-* behave almost the same, and so we use only *yar-* in what follows.

<sup>3</sup> Note that Zushi adopts Larson's (1991) Minimal Distance Principle (MDP): "An infinitive complement of a predicate P selects as its controller the minimal c-commanding noun phrase in the functional complex of P" (p. 115). The MDP is assumed to apply to D-structure representations. We have to notice here that Zushi's analysis crucially depends on a tacit assumption that the subject of the embedded clause in the *-te yar-* construction is *PRO*. This assumption, however, needs to be justified independently.

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