

What Is Raised Is Not Necessarily Lifted: Two Ways of Causing Something to Go Upward*

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1. Introduction

With the surge of interest in lexical semantics since the 90's, a number of lexical relations have been extensively studied, both intra-lexical (i.e. polysemy) and inter-lexical (e.g. synonymy). One thing that has been relatively understudied, however, seems to be how two apparently synonymous verbs differ from each other. Thus Jackendoff (1983) posits the following conceptual structures for *rise* and *raise*, claiming that the latter is the causative of the former.

(1) *rise*: [Event GO ([Thing X], $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{UPWARD} \\ \text{Path} \quad \langle Z \rangle \end{array} \right])]$

(2) *raise*: [Event CAUSE ([Thing X], [Event GO ([Thing Y], $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{UPWARD} \\ \text{Path} \quad \langle Z \rangle \end{array} \right])])]$

(Jackendoff (1983:184))

Yet Jackendoff (1990) recognizes the same causative-noncausative relationship between *lift* and *rise*.

(3) $x \text{ lift } y \rightarrow x \text{ cause } [y \text{ rise}]$ (Jackendoff (1990:39))

Indeed, to the extent that both *raise* and *lift* can be paraphrased as "to cause something to go upward," these two verbs are identical.

As long as one looks at these verbs as used in the spatial domain, the two verbs are apparently interchangeable. Thus (4a) and (4b) describe essentially the same act.

(4) a. She *raised her glass* to Jay, then gathered bag and book and paused at Jay's table. (BNC)

b. He *lifted the glass* of pastis, and took a large swallow. (BNC)

Furthermore, the parallel persists even when the upward movement is somewhat "modulated," so to speak: In (5) it is the gaze, rather than the eyes, that are moved upward; in (6) only part of the head moves upward.

(5) a. She *raised her eyes* from the newspaper when he came in. (LDOCE)

b. He *lifted his eyes* from the paper and glared. (CAMBRIDGE)

(6) a. Omi *raised her head* from her crochet-work. (BNC)

b. Brig *lifted his head* as the others came into the room. (LDOCE)

Thus all these facts seem to confirm the synonymy between *raise* and *lift*.

2. Differences between the Two Verbs

Yet once one turns to other uses, one immediately realizes that this is not necessarily the case. On the one hand, while *raise* can take *issues* as its direct object, this is not the case with *lift*.

(7) The book *raises many important issues* (for our consideration). (OALD)

(8) * The book *lifts many important issues* (for our consideration).

On the other hand, *lift* can be followed by *restrictions* or *the ban* as in (9).

(9) a. The restrictions on water usage have been lifted now that the river levels are normal.

b. At last they've lifted the ban on jeans at the club. (CAMBRIDGE)

But *raise* cannot take such entities as its direct object.

(10) *They raised a ban/restrictions.

If *raise* can take *sanctions* as its direct object at all, the meaning will be "to intensify" or "to increase the level of," almost the exact opposite of "to end," as witnessed by the following attested data.

(11) a. ... impose sanctions for every delinquent act and *raise sanctions* for further, more serious offenses.

(<http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=187529>)

b. If the frequency of detection and punishment is low, it may be impossible to *raise sanctions* sufficiently to deter all undesirable conduct. (<http://www.jstor.org/pss/1289667>)

It might be tempting to attribute the failure of synonymy to the fact that these uses have to do with non-concrete meanings, by saying that *raise* and *lift* have extended their meanings in abstract domains rather arbitrarily.

However, the problem cannot be solved by invoking the non-concrete character of examples like *raise an issue* or *lift sanctions*. In the following examples *raise* and *lift* are clearly used in non-concrete senses, yet the two verbs are again practically interchangeable.

(12) a. Gregory began to *raise his voice* in protest. (COBUILD)

b. She *lifted her voice* for the child to hear. (COBUILD)

(13) a. However, the charm of the city *raised her spirits* ... (BNC)

b. These delightful children *lifted my spirits* with their laughter. (COBUILD)

So in non-spatial domains *raise* and *lift* are sometimes synonymous and sometimes not. How are we to account for these apparently puzzling facts?

3. How the Abstract Meanings Emerge

3.1. Interactive Focus

At this point, it is very instructive to have a look at Lindner's (1981, 1982) analysis of verb particle combinations, which also covers two vertically-oriented predicates, i.e. *up* and *down*. These two particles can express a wide range of abstract meanings, having to do with perceptual salience (14a), cognitive salience (14b), or the state of operation (14c).

- (14) a. Turn *up* the light – Turn them *down*.
 b. The prosecution really played *up* one piece of evidence and the defense tried to play it *down*.
 c. The computer is *up*; God forbid it should go *down*.

(Lindner (1982:318))

In order to account for this range of meanings, Lindner speaks of a region of interactive focus:

Things (or people) located in this region can be in any of a cluster of states represented by this region: in use, prepared, active, mobile, agitated, cognitively or perceptually salient, existing, public, viable, known, and so on.

(Lindner (1982:317-18))

Various abstract meanings can be characterized in terms of either coming into this region or going out of it.

Now metaphorical UP paths lead into this region, whereas metaphorical DOWN paths lead away from it, as depicted in Figure 1. The range of meanings which *up* and *down* are capable of expressing in (14) are thus accounted for.

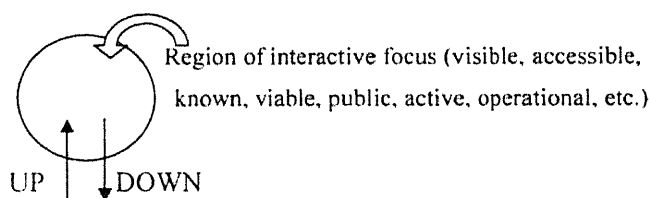


Figure 1: Region of interactive focus (adapted from Lindner (1982:318))

3.2. Raise and Interactive Focus

Let us now see how the abstract meaning of *raise* in (7), repeated here as (15), is to be accounted for in terms of this region of interactive focus.

- (15) The book *raises many important issues* (for our consideration).

In this connection, Rudzka-Ostyn (1988) proposes a very intriguing analysis. She argues that the *up* exemplified in (16) indicates that something has reached the hearer's awareness or receptivity.

- (16) a. Alies ... had *brought* the whole thing *up*.

- b. Your question *came up* at the meeting.
- c. I'll ask the next speaker to *take up* your suggestion.

(Rudzka-Ostyn (1988:539))

That is, the hearer's awareness counts as an abstract region. Consequently, *up* can be used to convey that a given idea is presented to the hearer for consideration.

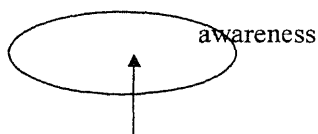


Figure 2

Rudzka-Ostyn argues that because of this conceptualization, an upward path profiled by *raise* can be associated with the speaker's conscious attempt to reach the level of the hearer's awareness.

Clearly, the abstract region of awareness as depicted in Figure 2 is one instantiation of the region of interactive focus. It follows, then, that the *raise* in (15) means what it means because it indicates coming into the region of interactive focus via the upward movement.

Note further that the following examples of *raise*, which express somewhat similar meanings, can also be analyzed along the same lines: Something becomes visible, accessible, or public as a result of reaching into the region of interactive focus.

(17) The announcement *raised a* {*cheer/laugh/murmur*}. (CAMBRIDGE)

(18) a. For me it always *raises fond memories* of broad main streets.

(COBUILD)

b. His jokes barely *raised a smile*.

(COBUILD)

3.3. Lift and Interactive Focus

Let us next turn to the abstract meanings of *lift*. It is rather straightforward to make sense of the *lift* in (9), repeated here as (19), in that what is lifted can now be regarded as going out of the region of interactive focus as described in Figure 3.

(19) a. *The restrictions* on water usage have been *lifted* now that the river levels are normal.

b. At last they've *lifted the ban* on jeans at the club. (CAMBRIDGE)

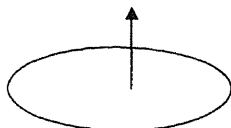


Figure 3

That is, what is in operation ceases to be so once it is moved out of that state. Hence the meaning of “to end.”

It seems that the following versions of *lift* are amenable to a similar analysis. Thus by regarding what is lifted as being moved out of one’s possession space (another instantiation of the region of interactive focus), it is quite natural that *lift* may mean “to steal” as in (20) or “to plagiarize” as in (21).

(20) a. They break into steel filing cabinets, open cupboards, or *lift a briefcase* from a locked car or office. (COBUILD)

b. Those radios were so cheap I’m sure *they’d* been *lifted*.

(CAMBRIDGE)

(21) *Many of his ideas* were *lifted* from other authors. (OALD)

Consequently, several abstract meanings of *lift* are characterized in terms of going out of the region of interactive focus.

3.4. Motion Into and Out of the Region

We are now in a position to see why the two apparently synonymous verbs, *raise* and *lift*, can sometimes express nearly opposite meanings. An entity may become visible, public, known, etc. by moving upward into the region of interactive focus. But it also becomes invisible, private, unknown, etc. by moving upward out of this region.

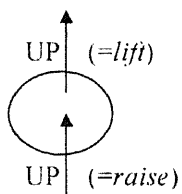


Figure 4

This is quite understandable when we consider the experiential basis of what it means to be visible: Objects which are below the line of sight are not visible, but when they move upward they enter the range of perceptual access, thereby becoming visible. But when they continue to move higher, they eventually exit the range of perceptual access, thereby becoming invisible once again.

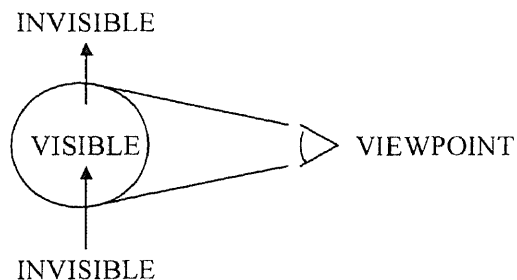


Figure 5: the range of perceptual access

It is now clear, then, why *raise* and *lift* cease to be synonymous in (15) and (19). Although both verbs mean “to cause something to go upward,” the two verbs end up designating entirely different movements: coming into the region of interactive focus (*raise*) and going out of it (*lift*).

4. Top-Focused vs. Bottom-Focused

But is there any reason why *raise* and *lift* should be aligned with coming into and going out of the region, respectively? It seems that indeed there is. Despite the fact that the two verbs are quite often nearly synonymous in the spatial domain (section 1), the difference just noted seems to carry over to the spatial senses of *raise* and *lift*. Thus the *lift* in (22a), which is used intransitively with the meaning “to reduce,” can be analyzed in terms of the schema in Figure 3, parallel to (19) to (21): to be removed from the relevant region by being moved upward.¹ The unavailability of its counterpart for *raise* suggests that the sense of going out of the region is somehow not compatible with *raise*.

- (22) a. The morning mist is lifting. (COBUILD)
 b. * The morning mist is raising.

This strongly indicates that the alignment of *raise/lift* with coming into/going out of the region cannot be a coincidence. It must be attributable to some fundamental difference between the two verbs as used in the spatial domain.

On closer inspection, it turns out that there is indeed a subtle difference between the two verbs. Thus, while *lift* may be accompanied by *down*, this is not the case with *raise*.

- (23) a. He lifted the box carefully down from the shelf. (CAMBRIDGE)
 b. * He raised the box carefully down from the shelf.

This means that with *lift*, the object may move downward following the initial upward movement, as in Figure 6.

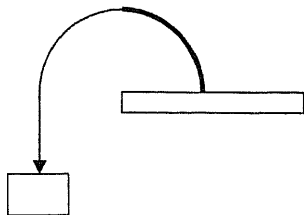


Figure 6: *lift the box down from the shelf*

This fact points to a very interesting characteristic of *lift*: What is lifted is detached from its former location.

This in turn can be captured by supposing that the two verbs focus on different parts of an entity that is caused to go upward: With *raise* the focus is on the top part (Figure 7), but with *lift* the bottom is the main concern (Figure 8).

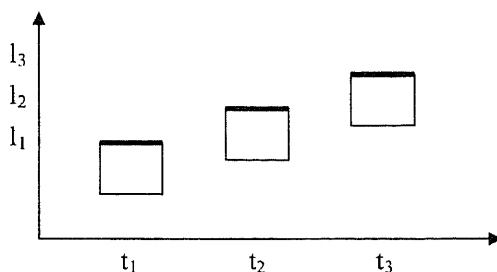


Figure 7: top-focused upward movement (=raise)

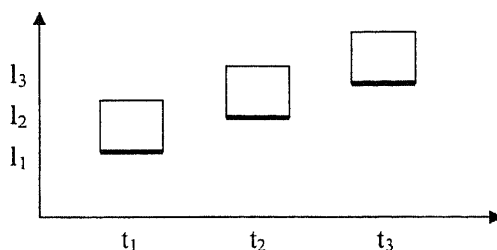


Figure 8: bottom-focused upward movement (=lift)

If the bottom goes upward, the entity as a whole necessarily goes upward. Consequently, what is lifted is necessarily detached from its former location. With the sense of detachment being essential to *lift*, it is sufficient that the box initially undergoes an upward movement in (23a). It does not matter whether the upward movement is followed by a downward movement or not.

By contrast, from the mere fact that the top goes upward, it does not follow that the whole entity gets detached from its former location. So *raise* in no way entails the notion of detachment. Consequently, there is no way of sanctioning the movement described in Figure 6 as “raise.”

The proposed top vs. bottom contrast between *raise* and *lift* is further confirmed by the following example.

(24) The desktop/table top was easy to raise, but hard to lift.

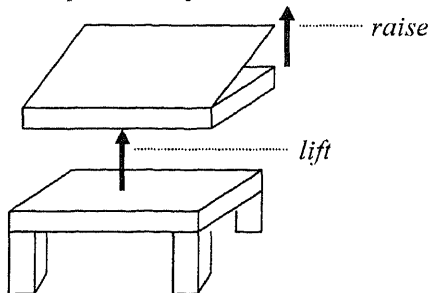


Figure 9: *raise* vs. *lift*

Clearly, *raise* refers to the upward movement of the top alone, and *lift* that of the whole entity.

Remarkably, this differential characterization of *raise* and *lift* allows us to solve the question raised above. It is quite natural that *raise*, describing a top-focused upward movement, should develop the sense of coming into the region of interaction focus, while *lift*, describing a bottom-focused upward movement, should develop that of going out of the region. Since one can only focus on an entity that comes into view, only *raise* is compatible with the sense of coming into the region of interaction focus.

5. Upward Movement without Displacement

It is to be noted that this view of the two verbs is compatible with the fact that *raise* and *lift* are quite often synonymous as far as the spatial domain is concerned. In many cases of our daily lives, it makes little difference whether the focus is on the top or on the bottom; either way, the whole entity ends up being at a higher location, after all. In other words, the difference is quite often neutralized.

Nevertheless, sometimes the difference manifests itself. In (22) and (23) the whole entity's displacement is at issue, so that only *lift* is allowed. This leads us to expect that if there are cases in which only the top portion goes upward, with the entity as a whole being not displaced in space as described in Figure 10, then only *raise* should be allowed.

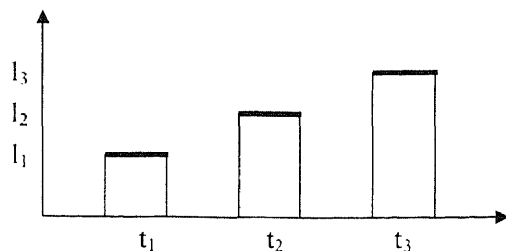


Figure 10

This prediction is in fact borne out. In the following examples, the most natural interpretation is that the top portion goes upward without the whole entity being detached from the base position. Under this interpretation, only *raise* is acceptable.

- (25) a. raise a statue b. *lift a statue
 (26) a. raise a castle b. *lift a castle
 (27) a. Heavy rains raised the river stage.
 b. *Heavy rains lifted the river stage.

Interestingly enough, this contrast seems to find its counterpart in the non-spatial domain once again. Growth is typically correlated with increase in vertical dimension, so it is rather to be expected that the particle *up* should contribute to the sense of growth as in *bring up* or *grow up*.

- (28) a. I *brought up* two children alone.
 b. I had *grown up* in the district. (COBUILD)

Crucially, what *up* expresses here is the increase in height, rather than the upward movement of the child's whole body, i.e. exactly the type of upward development as described in Figure 10. It is no wonder, then, that *raise* but not *lift* can express the meaning similar to *bring up*.

- (29) a. raise a child b. *lift a child

Thus even the contrast between (29a) and (29b), which might otherwise look quite an arbitrary fact, turns out to have its basis in the fundamental difference between the two verbs.

6. When the Two Verbs Are Synonymous in Abstract Domains

Lastly, let us address one remaining puzzle. As noted in section 2, in non-spatial domains sometimes *raise* and *lift* express entirely different meanings as in (30), but sometimes they are nearly synonymous as in (31) and (32).

- (30) a. The book *raises many important issues* (for our consideration).
 b. *The restrictions* on water usage have been *lifted* now that the river

levels are normal.

- c. *Many of his ideas were lifted* from other authors.
- (31) a. Gregory began to *raise his voice* in protest.
- b. She *lifted her voice* for the child to hear.
- (32) a. However, the charm of the city *raised her spirits* ...
- b. These delightful children *lifted my spirits* with their laughter.

It seems that there is some fundamental difference between the abstract meanings conveyed in (30) and those in (31) and (32).² What, then, could it be?

We have already seen that the abstract meanings of (30) can be plausibly analyzed as either coming into the region of interactive focus or going out of it. It follows, then, that the abstract meanings in (31) and (32) are *not* to be accounted for in terms of the region of interactive focus.

This seems to indeed be the case. Crucially, in both (31) and (32), the conveyed meanings are instances of orientational metaphors in the sense of Lakoff and Johnson (1980): MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN in the former and those of HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN in the latter. Furthermore, *raise* and *lift* continue to be synonymous as long as the relevant metaphor is one of an orientational nature. Thus in (33) it is MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN plus NUMERICAL SCALES ARE PATHS; in (34) GOOD IS UP; BAD IS DOWN; in (35) HIGH STATUS IS UP; LOW STATUS IS DOWN, and so on.

- (33) a. The Appeal Court quashed the suspended sentence but *raised* his fine to £300.
- b. The Reed Elsevier group *lifted* pre-tax profits to £412 million for 1992, from £346 million last time.

(both from BNC)

- (34) a. At home, improvements in urban sanitation and hygiene in hospitals were gradually *raising health standards*.
- b. Increasing the cost of bricks, timber and glass did not do much to *lift the housing standards* of the poor.

(both from BNC)

- (35) a. ... which have *raised* him to the status of (perhaps) the world's most famous film director.
- b. It had been Intelligence's own Self Inflicted Wound that had *lifted him* from the status of a policeman to that of a ranking diplomat.

(both from BNC)

Note that in orientational metaphors what is caused to move simply goes upward along the relevant scale as depicted in Figure 11: The progression is

continuous, as evidenced by the fact that these expressions can be modified by adverbials like *a little*.

- (36) a. He just *raised his voice a little* to get everyone's attention, like a tour guide on a busy street.

(<http://thelife.com/experience/spiritual-growth/nomorechristianniceguy/>)

- b. As he walked slowly across the lobby, the warmth *raised his spirits a little*.

(http://www.fanfiction.net/s/3434416/1/Extraordinary_Person)

And there is no upper limit beyond which the abstract movement no longer continues: One can continue to raise his voice even after he has done so.

By contrast, the abstract meanings to be characterized in terms of the region of interactive focus derive from the transition from the old state (non-P) to the new state (P) as shown in Figure 12: As there is no intermediate position in between, *raise an issue* or *lift a sanction* cannot be modified by adverbials like *a little*. And once a new state is reached, one cannot continue to "raise an issue" or to "lift a sanction."



Figure 11

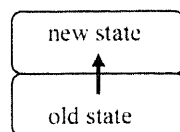


Figure 12

Given these two schemas for the abstract meanings, then, it is no wonder that the difference between *raise* and *lift* gets neutralized in Figure 11. Whether the focus is on the top or the bottom, the element that moves ends up being at a higher location on the scale, after all. In other words, the abstract space to be defined in terms of orientational metaphors is very much like the concrete, physical space as far as the upward movement is concerned. This is why *raise* and *lift* are nearly synonymous in (31) to (35), unlike in (30).

7. Conclusion

While both *raise* and *lift* can be paraphrased as "to cause something to go upward," the two verbs are not always synonymous. This is because the two verbs highlight different parts of a moved entity: With *raise* the focus is on the top of the entity, whereas with *lift* the bottom is the main concern. In the spatial domain, quite often this difference does not lead to a significant divergence of meaning

between the two verbs, but in non-spatial domains it does: What is lifted is necessarily detached from its former location, and the sense of detachment motivates such expressions as *lift sanctions* or *lift his ideas*. By contrast, *raise* is in accord with the sense of coming into the region of interactive focus, as in *raise an issue*.

The fact that an alternate focus on different parts of an entity can contribute to apparently puzzling behaviors of two seemingly synonymous verbs suggests not only that the lexical decompositions as practiced in many lexical semantic studies (Jackendoff (1983, 1990)) are too coarse, but also that one cannot simply speak of MORE IS UP; LESS IS DOWN and leave it at that. After all, abstract, metaphorical meanings are not a monolithic phenomenon, as revealed in section 6.

NOTES

* Sometimes it takes many years to realize the real significance of a remark given casually. The sentence in (24) has been in the back of my mind for more than ten years, always eluding my full grasp. Yet I think I finally succeeded in making sense of it, which enabled me to write this paper. I'd like to express my deepest gratitude to William E. Lee for providing me with this very pertinent observation. I'm also grateful to Ian Richards, Russell Lee-Goldman, and Tony Higgins for their help at various stages of the preparation of this paper.

¹ *Raise* may also be used intransitively, though in a very limited context, i.e. in the generative syntax literature.

(i) a. *John* then raises to matrix subject position, satisfying the EPP, Case, and agreement.
(Chomsky (1995:283))

b. **John* then lifts to matrix subject position, satisfying the EPP, Case, and agreement.

² A similar contrast can be detected between (i) and (ii), which involve particles *up* and *down*.

(i) a. Turn *up* the light – Turn them *down*.

b. The prosecution really played *up* one piece of evidence and the defense tried to play it *down*.

c. The computer is *up*; God forbid it should go *down*.

(Lindner (1982:318))

(ii) a. His fever shot *up*/came *down*.

b. Speed *up*/slow *down*.

(Lindner (1982:317))

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