

Reports on the Third Annual Meeting
of the Tsukuba English Linguistic Society

Semantic Structures of NP-to-VP Complements

Kozo Iwabe

I will propose three semantic structures for certain verbs with an NP-to-VP complement:

- (1) WANT-type (like, prefer, want, etc.)

I wanted	him to leave early
----------	--------------------

- (2) TELL-type (ask, advise, tell, order, (persuade), etc.)

I told him	to leave early
------------	----------------

- (3) FORCE-type (compel, force, persuade, etc.)

I forced	him	to leave early
----------	-----	----------------

In former transformational analyses, these verbs were divided into two types: the WANT-type verbs and the PERSUADE-type verbs. But observation of certain syntactic and semantic phenomena supports the tripartite distinction which subdivides the PERSUADE-type verbs into two categories. The tripartite distinction is semantically natural in that the verbs of each type make a natural class: (1) EMOTION, (2) SPEECH ACT, (3) ENFORCEMENT. Further arguments for the distinction are provided by pseudo-cleft and other syntactic tests of the independence of infinitives, and the scope of main-subject's controllability, the semantic notion which entails the implicativity (in the sense of Karttunen) of the FORCE-type verbs. A detailed discussion is made on the ambivalent character of the verb

persuade. Finally, it is suggested that the VP-Prominence Principle, which governs the indirect speech act of requesting (i.e. the contrast between Can you pass the salt? and Are you able to pass the salt?), may be relevant to the semantic structures we proposed.