

## **SEMANTICS & PRAGMATICS**

## Some Remarks on the Benefactive Ditransitive Construction \*

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### 1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the so-called benefactive ditransitive construction (hereafter the BDC), which is exemplified in (1a):

- (1) a. John baked Mary a cake.  
 b. John baked a cake for Mary.

This construction resembles the ditransitive construction which alternates with the *to*-dative form “NP<sub>1</sub> V NP<sub>3</sub> to NP<sub>2</sub>”, but differs in that the corresponding prepositional form includes the benefactive preposition *for*, as shown in (1b). One of the interesting problems with the BDC is that not all the verbs which occur in the *for*-dative form are allowed to enter into this construction. For examples:

- (2) a. Uncle Jim *cooked* a meal for Margaret.  
 b. Uncle Jim *cooked* Margaret a meal.  
 (3) a. Uncle Jim *painted* a room for Margaret.  
 b. ? Uncle Jim *painted* Margaret a room.  
 (4) a. Uncle Jim *watched* a television programme for Margaret.  
 b. \* Uncle Jim *watched* Margaret a television programme.

(all examples are cited from Allerton (1978:23))

Although all the verbs given above can occur in the *for*-dative form as shown in the (a) examples, there are differences as to whether they are compatible with the BDC. The verb *cook* readily appears in the BDC, as in (2b); by contrast, a verb such as *paint* or *watch* is less compatible or even incompatible with the construction, as shown in (3b) and (4b), respectively. These observations indicate that there are restrictions on the verbs found in the construction. A question then arises of: What determines the occurrence of a verb in the BDC? More generally, what controls the acceptability of the construction? The main purpose of this paper is to provide convincing answers to these questions.

The organization of this paper is as follows. In section 2 I will review two types of previous analyses and see how they account for the questions raised above. In section 3 I will present my own analysis, and argue that the notions of “effectum” and “affectum” are

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crucial for explaining the acceptability of the BDC. I will examine various types of verbs which are well attested in the construction, and show that the acceptability is primarily controlled by a semantic constraint based on the notion of effectum. I will also show that a constraint based on the notion of “ready to use”, which is proposed by Wierzbicka (1989), plays an important role in explaining the acceptability of the construction with verbs which take affected objects as the direct object. It will be further argued that the two constraints can be integrated. Section 4 concludes this paper.

## 2. Previous Analyses

### 2.1. *Verb-Class Approaches*

It is generally observed that the verbs most frequently found in the BDC are verbs of creation and of obtaining (cf. Green (1974), Oehrle (1974), Gropen et al. (1989), Pinker (1989), Goldberg (1995), among others). Examples are shown in the following (here I follow the classification of Pinker (1989:114)):<sup>1,2</sup>

#### (5) a. verbs of creation

*bake, make, build, cook, sew, knit, toss* (when a salad results), *fix* (when a drink results), *pour* (when a drink results)

#### b. verbs of obtaining

*get, buy, find, steal, order, win, earn, grab*

Besides the verbs given above, it is said that verbs of performance (e.g., *sing, dance*) and verbs of preparing (e.g., *peel, clean*) are found in the construction (cf. Jackendoff (1990), and Levin (1993)). These verbs can be viewed as belonging to either of the verb classes given in (5). Verbs of performance are broadly characterized as verbs of creation in the sense that performances themselves can be viewed as products created by a performer. As for verbs of preparing, Levin (1993:175) states that they function like verbs of obtaining when they appear in the construction (note also that in Pinker’s classification most verbs of preparing are classified under the class of verbs of creation). Based on these observations, many researchers have assumed that the set of verbs found in the BDC can be restricted in terms of “verb class”: the verbs which are allowed to enter into the construction are, after all, either verbs of creation or verbs of obtaining.

Within verb-class approaches, the semantic restriction on the verbs found in the BDC

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<sup>1</sup> The verb classifications differ slightly among researchers. See also Green (1974), Wierzbicka (1988) and Levin (1993).

<sup>2</sup> Note that there are verbs which do not occur in the BDC, although they seem to belong to the verb classes given in (5) (e.g., *construct, create, purchase, obtain*). Following Pinker (1989), I assume that these verbs are precluded from entering into the construction for morphophonological reasons. For detailed discussion on the morphophonological constraints, see Pinker (1989: sections 2.1, 4.4.1.1).

has been linked to the “core meaning” of the construction. Since Green (1974), it has been generally held in previous studies that the ditransitive argument structure is associated with the core meaning “X causes Y to have/receive Z” (cf. Oehrle (1974), Gropen et al. (1989), Pinker (1989), Goldberg (1995), among others). Based on this idea, Pinker (1989:84), for example, proposes a semantic constraint on *for*-dative verbs which says that “verbs taking the *for*-dative structure will alternate only if the agent, as a result of affecting the patient in the manner specified by the verb, can cause the beneficiary to possess the patient.”<sup>3</sup> Considered in this light, it is not surprising that verbs of creation and of obtaining readily occur in the construction: as Pinker argues, verbs of these types satisfy the constraint since creating or obtaining something can be viewed as a means of causing someone to possess it (see also Goldberg (1995:65)). For example, although a transitive verb *bake* only denotes the creation of a product, we can easily imagine that in the situation described by a ditransitive expression such as *John baked Mary a cake*, Mary came to possess the cake as a result of John’s action.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, verbs whose meaning is incompatible with the “cause to have” sense are not allowed to appear in the construction:

(6) a. \* John *killed* Mary the centipede. (Kaga (1997:212))

b. \* John *opened* Mary the door. (Kishimoto (2001:137))

As shown above, verbs such as *kill* and *open* are excluded from the construction, although they appear in the *for*-dative form (e.g., *John killed the centipede for Mary/John opened the door for Mary*). According to Kaga (1997) and Kishimoto (2002), the unacceptability of (6a, b) is due to the fact that the verbs merely denote simple actions, and thus the sentences cannot be interpreted to mean that Mary came to possess the centipede or the door as a result of John’s action. In other words, the verbs *kill* and *open* fail to satisfy the constraint proposed by Pinker, and hence are not allowed to occur in the construction. It should also be noted that there seems to be no way to reinterpret these verbs as either verbs of creation or of obtaining.

To sum the discussion so far, most researchers who take verb-class approaches assume that the construction is available only to verbs which can be interpreted as either verbs of

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<sup>3</sup> Pinker, however, assumes that this requirement is only a necessary condition and not a sufficient one since there are many verbs which seem to be cognitively construable as resulting in a change of possession but are in fact excluded from the BDC (for example, verbs of choosing such as *choose*, *pick*). Given this fact, Pinker assumes that sufficient conditions are determined by a set of “narrow-range rules,” which actually determine whether a verb can occur in the construction. In this light, it can be said that verbs such as *choose* and *pick* cannot occur in the construction because the narrow range rules do not apply to them for certain reasons.

<sup>4</sup> Note, however, that the BDC does not strictly imply that the direct object referent (in this case, Mary) has actually received the indirect object referent (in this case, a cake). As Goldberg (1995:32) notes, what is implied by the BDC is that the subject referent performed an action *with the intention of* giving the direct object referent to the indirect object referent.

creation or of obtaining. Moreover, it is claimed that the restriction on the verbs follows from the compatibility between the meanings of a verb and the construction; that is, the meaning of a verb must be conceptually compatible with the core meaning of the construction, “X causes Y to have/receive Z.”

## 2.2. Takami (2003)

Based on a careful examination of the BDC, Takami claims that it is difficult to maintain the assumption that only verbs of creation and of obtaining can be used in the construction. He points out two empirical problems with verb-class approaches.

First, contrary to the claim that simple action verbs are excluded from the BDC, Takami points out that action verbs such as *kill* and *open* do occur in the construction in certain contexts. Compare the following examples with those in (6):

- (7) a. John *killed* Mary a centipede for her collection. (Takami (2003:204))  
 b. There now, I’m going to *open* you a new box and pour you some cereal. (Takami (2003:204))  
 c. Mom *cut* us a/the birthday cake. (Takami (2003:205))

According to him, the difference in acceptability between (6a) and (7a) is due to the fact that only in the latter example can the indirect object referent be interpreted as the recipient; the adverbial phrase *for her collection* indicates that Mary is collecting dead centipedes, and thus we can easily imagine that the centipede which John killed was given to Mary. Similarly, as shown in (7b) and (7c), verbs such as *open* and *cut* may enter into the construction, when an appropriate context is set up to indicate that the indirect object referent comes/came to possess the direct object referent. On the basis of this observation, he claims that the acceptability of examples (7a-c) cannot be accounted for, if the BDC is indeed available only to verbs of creation and of obtaining. Moreover, he argues that the acceptability of the BDC is not solely determined by what kind of verb a sentence involves; rather, as for the examples in (7), their acceptability is heavily affected by context. That is, these examples are judged to be acceptable because each sentence as a whole makes possible the interpretation of a possessive relationship between the indirect and direct object referents.

Secondly, Takami points out that there are cases where the BDC is judged to be acceptable even when a sentence does not imply at all that a possessional relationship is established between the indirect and direct object referents. Observe first the following examples, which are cited from Takami (2003:205):

- (8) a. Good Lord, it’s hot in here. I’m dying. *Open* me a window, would you, John?  
 b. I promised my buddy I’d *kill/shoot* him some gooks before nightfall.  
 c. Babe Ruth *hit* his team and fans another home run.

For example, it is clear that in (8a) the speaker does not come to possess the window as a

result of the hearer opening it. Rather, as Takami states, the sentence is intended to mean that the speaker is asking the hearer to open a window for her own benefit. Let us next consider another type of the BDC, which Takami calls the “derring-do type” (as for this type, see also Green (1974:95f.) and Oehrle (1976:111ff.)).

- (9) a. *Cry* me a river. (Green (1974:96))  
 b. *Crush* me a mountain (Green (1974:96))  
 c. *Open* me the door within the next ten minutes, and the money is yours.  
 (Takami 2003:207)

According to Takami, the above sentences describe situations where “the subject referent performs a heroic act or an act of derring-do, with the indirect referent as the witness (p. 211).” Thus, for example, he paraphrases (9a) as “Cry so long and hard that your tears make a river.” It is clear that these examples do not imply causation of change of possession, either. Moreover, since the verbs at issue are neither verbs of creation nor of obtaining, it seems that verb-class approaches fail to account for the existence of examples (8a-c) and (9a-c), as Takami claims.<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of these observations, Takami concludes that the assumption that only verbs of creation and of obtaining can be used in the construction is untenable; it cannot predict the occurrence of simple action verbs in the BDC. Alternatively, he claims that the acceptability of the BDC is primarily controlled by a semantic constraint as follows: “The benefactive direct object construction [= the BDC] is acceptable to the extent that it is clearly shown that an action the subject referent performs is intended for the benefit of the indirect object referent, and that the latter receives some benefit from the action (p.213).” Note here that the examples in (7)-(9) all describe situations where the subject referent performs an action for the benefit of the indirect object referent; in examples (7a-c), possessing the direct object referent as a result of the action can be seen as benefit; examples (8a-c) express beneficial relations between the subject and indirect object referents, with no actual change of possession; in examples (9a-c) the actions are performed for the benefit of the indirect object referent in the sense that he or she is the intended audience. Thus, Takami claims that the examples at issue all satisfy the semantic constraint and as a consequence are judged to be acceptable.

It should be noted that Takami’s approach crucially differs from verb-class approaches in that his constraint is imposed not on the meaning of a verb but on the BDC as a whole. Although he admits that the acceptability of the BDC is affected to some extent by what kind

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<sup>5</sup> As for the derring-do type, Pinker (1989) and Goldberg (1995) assume that the examples in (9) are construed as a metaphorical extension of change of possession. Contrary to this view, Takami points out some empirical problems with their metaphor-based approaches and concludes that their analyses are difficult to maintain. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Takami (2003:207ff.).

of verb is involved in the construction, his point is that there are many cases where the acceptability is sensitive to context. He concludes that in order to explain the whole distribution of the construction it is necessary to consider whether a sentence as a whole expresses a beneficial relation.

### 2.3. *Problems with the Previous Analyses*

As we saw in 2.2, empirical problems with verb-class approaches are discussed in detail by Takami (2003). I agree with his claim that in order to explain the general distribution of the BDC, it is not enough to just look into the semantics of verbs and state that only verbs of creation and of obtaining are allowed to appear in the construction. In other words, the restriction proposed by verb-class approaches is too “severe” in the sense that it simply excludes simple action verbs from the construction.

The semantic constraint proposed by Takami can explain a wide range of examples. A closer inspection, however, reveals that his approach is not without problems, either. Given the semantic constraint, it is predicted that simple action verbs may enter into the construction if the context suggests that an action denoted by a verb is intended for the benefit of the indirect object referent. There are, however, verbs which cannot form acceptable BDCs even if the context is set up properly:

(10) a. \* John *broke* me a vase. (cf. John broke a vase for me.) (Takami (2003:215))

b. ??/\* John *broke* me a vase since I dropped my wedding ring in it and the only way to get it back was to break it into pieces.

Takami argues that (10a) is unacceptable because the action denoted by the verb is not shown to be intended for the benefit of the speaker. Thus, the semantic constraint proposed by Takami appears to work well in explaining why the verb *break* is excluded from the construction. What is interesting here is that (10b) is also judged to be unacceptable. This fact seems to be unexpected under Takami’s analysis: since the *since*-clause in this sentence clearly indicates that the action performed by the subject referent was intended for the benefit of the speaker, the semantic constraint should predict that (10b) would be acceptable. In this connection, recall that although verbs such as *kill* and *open* are basically excluded from the construction for the same reason as *break*, these verbs can appear in the construction if appropriate contexts are set up (cf. (7a-b)). Then, it is unclear why the same does not hold true for (10b). These observations suggest that the semantic constraint proposed by Takami is too “loose”, since it wrongly predicts that almost any verb could enter into the construction as long as it is contextually clear that an action the subject referent performs is intended for the benefit of the indirect object referent.

Although I agree that the acceptability of the BDC is ultimately controlled by the semantic constraint proposed by Takami, it seems to me that his analysis is incomplete in that it does not clarify the notion of benefit relating to the construction. In other words, we need

to make it clear what factors determine whether or not the indirect object referent receives benefit as a result of an action performed by the subject referent. With this in mind, I will attempt to reveal some semantic factors which play crucial roles in explaining the acceptability of the BDC as well as the restriction on the verbs which occur in the construction.

### 3. Analysis

In this section I examine in detail various types of verbs which are found in the BDC and argue that it is important to take into account the notion of “effectum/affectum” in order to explain the acceptability of the construction. The effectum/affectum contrast was first mentioned by Fillmore (1968). According to Fillmore, “effected objects” are entities which are understood to exist prior to an action; “affected objects” are those which come into existence as a result of an action. In the following I divide the set of verbs found in the construction into two types, according to whether a verb takes an effected object or an affected object as the direct object (this way of classification is also adopted in Allerton (1978)).

#### 3.1. Verbs Which Take Effected Objects

##### 3.1.1. Verbs of Creation

We will first examine verbs which take an effected object as the direct object. Verbs of creation describe the creation of an entity, and in this respect they take an effected object as the direct object (cf. Levin (1993:173)). To answer the question of why these verbs readily occur in the BDC, we begin by considering the following pair of examples:

- (11) a. John *dug* Mary a hole. (cf. John dug a hole for Mary.)  
 b. \*John *dug* Mary a ground. (cf. John dug a ground for Mary.)

Although the same verb is used in both sentences in (11), there is a clear contrast in acceptability between (11a) and (11b). Note here that the crucial difference between the former and the latter is the interpretation of the direct object. In (11a) the direct object is interpreted as an effected object because the action of digging a hole is viewed as creating a new entity; by contrast, in (11b) it is understood as an affected object because the action of digging the ground is viewed as performing an operation on a pre-existing object (i.e., the ground). Then, it is clear from the acceptability contrast given above that the verb *dig* can occur in the BDC when it takes an effected object as the direct object and is used in the creation sense. The same account seems to carry over the contrasts seen in the following:

- (12) a. Sue *fixed* Dick a drink. (Jackendoff (1990:196))  
 b. \*Sue *fixed* Dick the radiator. (ibid.)  
 (13) a. Sue *poured* Dick out some coffee. (Jackendoff (1990:196))  
 b. \*Sue *poured* Dick some cement. (ibid.)



- (14) a. I *cleared* him a place to sleep on the floor. (Langacker (1991:360))  
 b. \*I *cleared* him a floor. (ibid.)

Takami (2003) explains the observed difference in acceptability by assuming that the verbs in the (a) sentences function as verbs of creation, while those in the (b) sentences do not. But what I would like to emphasize here is that the availability of the creation sense in the former sentences should be attributed to the interpretation of the direct object. As the unacceptability of the (b) sentences indicates, when the direct object is interpreted as affected objects, these verbs cannot function as verbs of creation and thus are excluded from the construction.

Based on these observations we propose that the following constraint is at work:

(15) Effectum Constraint:

The BDC is judged to be acceptable to the extent that the direct object is interpreted as an effected object.

Given the effectum constraint (hereafter EC), it is not surprising that verbs of creation readily occur in the BDC; these verbs, as one of their lexical properties, take an effected object as the direct object. Moreover, it is expected that verbs which are found in the construction should take an effected object as the direct object. In what follows, I will consider whether or not this prediction is borne out by examining other verb classes whose members are well attested in the construction.

### 3.1.2. *Verbs of Obtaining*

Let us next move on to verbs of obtaining. At first glance, it seems that verbs of this type do not take effected objects. Consider the following examples:

- (16) a. I *bought* him a red hot, a sort of sausage on a roll with mustard.  
 (The British National Corpus (BNC))  
 b. We *got* her a flat in the same block as ours, although... (BNC)

To be sure, in the examples above the sort of sausage on a roll or the flat must exist prior to the actions performed by the subject referents; we cannot buy or get something which does not exist in the physical world. However, there is a good reason to believe that they are in fact viewed as effected objects. According to Kusayama (1997, 1998), the notion of existence is not limited to a physical domain, but can be extended to abstract fields, such as the conceptual and possessional domains. Based on this idea, Kusayama (1998:211) argues that “in the action of buying, the ownership of goods is not interpreted as pre-existent in the buyer’s possessional domain, though it may be understood to be pre-existent physically.” In other words, what is bought or obtained are regarded as coming into existence in our possessional domain only after the actions has taken place. Here, I follow Kusayama and consider that the referents of the direct object in (16) are understood as effected objects in the possessional domain of the subject referents as well as that of the indirect object referents.

The idea of domain extension is important for the present analysis, since it not only ensures that the notion of effectum applies to the abstract domain as well as the physical one, but also suggests that it is necessary to consider “what” domain is relevant in deciding whether or not an entity count as an effected object.

With the idea of domain extension in mind, let us further examine other members of the class of verbs of obtaining. Consider the following examples which include verbs such as *earn*, *gain*, and *win*. As Green (1974:94) notes, these verbs are well attested in the BDC but differ from the other verbs which occur in the BDC in that they take inanimate subjects.

- (17) a. John’s essay *won* him a nice 1969 Fiat. (Green (1974:99))  
 b. The working man’s 47.7 hours a week in 1964 should have *earned* him 18.11 (say 162 a week now), but... (BNC)  
 c. His work quickly *gained* him a high reputation. (BNC)

Nakau (1989) argues that in an expression such as *Mary won a prize*, the direct object referent (a prize) is not pre-existent (hence, an effected object), since it is construed as coming into existence after the event of winning. In this connection, Kusayama (1997, 1998) further claims that in this case the relevant domain is not the physical world, but the possessional domain of Mary. Turning to the examples in (17), we can say that the same line of analysis also applies to these examples. For instance, in (17a) the Fiat is understood as coming into existence in John’s possessional domain only after his essay won the award, and in this respect it can be said that the direct object referent (i.e., a nice 1969 Fiat) is an effected object.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.1.3 *Verbs of Performance and Verbs of Choosing*

As we saw in section 2, the verbs of performance is another class whose members are frequently found in the BDC (the following examples are cited from Wierzbicka (1988:370)).

- (18) a. *Read* me a story.  
 b. Betty *sang* Bill a song.  
 c. Jim *played* Mary a mazurka.

As for verbs of this type, Levin (1993:179) states that they describe performances and these performances themselves can be regarded as effected objects (recall also the discussion in section 2.1). Here again, it might be objected that in the above examples the direct object

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<sup>6</sup> One might argue here that (17a) and the transitive sentence *Mary won a prize* differ as to what domain is selected in deciding whether or not the direct object referents are effected objects: in the former case the relevant domain is the possessional domain of the indirect object referent, while in the latter it is the possessional domain of the subject referent. However, this should not be so surprising given that the selection of the relevant domain is determined by the semantics of a verb and its arguments, as Kusayama claims. In this connection, it is also worth recalling that the ditransitive construction which alternates with the *to*-dative form focuses on the change of state in the possessional domain of the indirect object referent (that is, whether he or she comes to possess something). Given these considerations, it seems reasonable to assume that in the case of the BDC the relevant domain is also restricted to the possessional domain of the indirect object referent.

(i.e., *a story*, *a song*, or *a mazurka*) cannot be interpreted as effected objects, since what is read, sang, or played on musical instruments is usually conceived of as existing in the physical world prior to the performances. Moreover, even in the case where a song, for instance, is improvised in the course of a performance, it could be said that a newly created song exists in the performer's conceptual domain; we cannot sing a song we don't know. At first sight, this line of reasoning seems to be plausible. I argue, however, that this is not the case with the examples in (18). What should be noticed here is that in these examples the direct object represents an "instance" of artistic performance. That is, the direct object *a story* in (18a), for example, represents an instance of a reading of a story by the performer, but not the content itself. Similarly, in (18b) *a song* expresses an instance of singing performed by Betty, but not the song itself (i.e., a short piece of music with words). Thus, it can be said that a token-reading or a token-singing is in a sense "created" by a performer, and that it comes into existence in the conceptual domain of the indirect object only after the performance has taken place. Given this, we can now understand why Levin regards the referents of the direct object in (18a-c) as effected objects.

Lastly, let us briefly consider verbs of choosing. It is said in the literature that verbs of this type are excluded from the BDC (see note 3). By citing a comment made by Bowerman (1987), Pinker (1989), however, points out that the acceptability of the BDC with *pick* or *choose* greatly improves when a particle such as *out* is added. In fact, my informant has pointed out to me that she finds a sharp contrast in acceptability between the (a) and (b) sentences in the following:

(19) a. ??We can *pick* you some new fashionable clothes.

b. We need to go *pick* you some clothes out.

(20) a. ??I *chose* her a dress.

b. I *chose* her out a charming dress.

According to Pinker (1989:114), the acceptability of the (b) sentences is explained as follows: "this is probably because the particle *out* when combined with *pick* supplies the crucial missing element of meaning, involving obtaining (or, more precisely, obtaining by removal from a location)." Then, it might be possible to argue that the addition of *out* makes it easy to infer that *some clothes* or *a charming dress* will come/came into existence in the possessional domain of the subject referent as a result of the action of choosing. Moreover, we can say that they are understood as effected objects also in the possessional domain of the indirect object referent, since it is only after the subject referent chooses out something that it is given to the indirect object referent. Although I cannot at this point give a full answer to the question of why verbs of choosing sound to most native speakers awkward with the BDC, it would be enough to state here that when these verbs are used with a particle such as *out*, the direct object is more easily understood as effected objects, and hence the acceptability of the

BDC improves.

### 3.1.4. Summary

So far, I have examined the set of verbs which are typically found in the BDC and showed that they all take an effected object as the direct object. On the basis of this observation I conclude that the appearance of these verbs in the construction is best explained by the EC. In other words, verbs of creation and of obtaining readily occur in the construction because the semantics of these verbs are inherently compatible with the EC; when these types of verbs are used in the BDC, they all describe situations where a new entity comes into existence in the possessional domain of the indirect object referent. It should be also noticed that the notions of “causation of change of possession” and “benefit,” which are said to be crucial for explaining the acceptability of the BDC, can be reduced to the notion of effectum. As for the constraint proposed by Pinker, the existence of a newly created/obtained entity in a situation described makes it easy to infer that the indirect object referent will possess the entity; as for the constraint proposed by Takami, we can easily imagine a situation where a newly created/obtained entity qualifies as a benefit (for example, when it is given to someone as a present). Then, we can say that the notion of effectum should be regarded as a factor which clarifies the notion of benefit. From these considerations we conclude that the EC plays a crucial role in explaining the restriction on the verbs which appear in BDC as well as the well-formedness of the construction.

### 3.2. Verbs Which Take Affected Objects

Given the discussion in the preceding subsections, it is expected that verbs which do not take an effected object as the direct object are incompatible with the BDC. There are, however, cases where certain verbs that take affected objects in fact occur in the construction.

- (21) a. Betty *ironed* Jim a shirt. (Wierzbicka (1988:368))  
 b. Jim *fried* Betty an egg. (ibid.)  
 c. Daddy *peeled* Sally an orange. (ibid.)

The verbs given above are what Wierzbicka (1989:369) calls “(verbs of) preparing for use.” As mentioned in section 2.1, verbs of this type are said to appear in the construction since they can be analyzed as belonging to the class of verbs of creation. Note, however, that these verbs can also be classified into the verbs of change of state, and in this respect the direct object they take should be regarded as an affected object. Furthermore, it seems difficult to state that in the above examples the shirt or the orange, for example, is an effected object since it is hardly the case that it comes into existence as a result of the action of ironing or of peeling. Then, how can we explain the fact that the examples above are judged to be acceptable?

In answering this question, it is important to consider “how” the referent of the direct object is affected. Wierzbicka (1988:368ff.) claims that the notion “ready to use” is crucial

for explaining the acceptability of examples (21a-c): “the quicker and the more superficial the change which makes an object ‘ready to use’, the more felicitous the sentence [= the BDC] which describes it.” To demonstrate her claim, she points out the following contrast:

- (22) a. She ironed him a shirt. (Wierzbicka (1988:369))  
 b. ? She washed him a shirt. (ibid.)

According to Wierzbicka, (22b) is slightly less felicitous than (22a), although the difference in acceptability is subtle (in fact, my informant also finds the latter slightly better than the former). She argues that (22a) is acceptable because we can easily understand that a shirt becomes more ready to wear after it is ironed. On the other hand, (22b) is less acceptable because merely washing a shirt is not enough to make it ready to wear; we must at least dry the wet shirt before we wear it. Similarly, she explains why (21b) and (21c) are judged to be acceptable by claiming that in these examples it is clear that the actions of frying an egg and peeling an orange make the entities in question more ready to eat. Following Wierzbicka, I propose that the following constraint is at work:

(23) Affectum Constraint:

The BDC with a verb which take an affected object as the direct object is judged to be acceptable to the extent that it is clearly shown that the direct object referent becomes more ready to use as the result of the action.

With the affectum constraint (hereafter AC) in mind, let us further consider verbs such as *save*, *left*, and *keep*. As shown in the following, these verbs readily occur in the construction.

- (24) a. John *saved* his boss the business letters. (Nemoto (1998:219))  
 b. He *left* me some fruit for dinner. (Green (1974:91))  
 c. Will I *keep* you a loaf on Wednesday? (BNC)

In the examples above, the verbs describe the event of storage (cf. Nemoto (1998)).<sup>7</sup> For example, (24a) denotes a situation where John kept the business letters in a safe place with the intension of giving them to his boss at some future point in time. Here again, it seems impossible to state that the acceptability of (24a-c) can be captured by the EC; in the situations described by these sentences the direct object referents must exist in the physical world prior to the action of storing (otherwise, we cannot store it). Then, why are these verbs allowed to occur in the construction? I claim that the same line of reasoning as in (21) and (22) applies to the cases in (24). Notice that in the situations described by the above examples the direct object referents are kept in a good condition (cf. Nemoto (1998:229)). In other words, they are kept available for future use. Viewed in this light, it can be said that

<sup>7</sup> As Nemoto points out, ditransitive *save* can also be used to describe the event of preventing waste of some valued object (e.g., *The director saved the section chief the trouble of sacking Bill*). For reasons of space I will concentrate here on the “storage” *save* and leave this kind of *save* untouched.

the business letters, some fruits, or a loaf became more ready to use as a result of the action of storing. Take (24c) for example: in a situation where the speaker (perhaps, a bakery employee) kept a loaf for the hearer (a shopper), the loaf is understood as being in the state of 'ready to eat/bring it back.' Similarly, we can say that in (24a) the business letters were made available for the boss to read it later. Thus, it is safe to conclude that the AC explains both the acceptability of the sentences in (24) and the appearance of the verbs in the construction.

The validity of the AC is further supported by the following examples:

- (25) a. John *opened* Mary {a bottle of beer/a letter from her grandmother}.  
 b. Mother *broke* her sons chocolate (into three pieces).

Example (25a) indicates that the verb *open* can enter into the construction if it is clear in what way the actions made the direct object referents more ready to use (cf. Wierzbicka (1988: 370)).<sup>8</sup> As for these examples, we can easily imagine that if we unscrew a bottle of beer we can readily drink beer; or if we open an envelope we can readily read a letter. Thus, the acceptability of the examples in (25a) can be captured by the AC. Of greater interest is the acceptability of (25b). According to my informant, this sentence is perfectly acceptable, compared with the other BDCs including the verb *break* (cf. (10a, b)). This observation appears to be striking because it has been commonly thought that the verb is completely excluded from the BDC. Within our analysis, however, the acceptability of (25b) can be accounted for by claiming that the sentence satisfies the AC; it is natural to think that the action of breaking (a bar of) chocolate into small pieces makes it more ready for children to eat. In this connection, recall the example in (10b). In this example it is obvious that the action of breaking the vase can in no way make it more ready to use. Hence, the sentence

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<sup>8</sup> Takami (2003:213) points out the following contrast in support of his idea that the semantic constraint based on the notion of benefit is in fact crucial for explaining the acceptability of the BDC.

- (i) a. John *opened* me a window since I was pouring sweat.  
 b. ??John *opened* me a window because it was stuffy in the room.

According to him, the (a) sentence is felicitous, while the (b) one is marginal. He argues that the former is acceptable because the *since*-clause clearly indicates that John's act of opening a window was intended solely for the benefit of the speaker. On the other hand, the latter is unacceptable because it is unclear whether the action was done for the indirect object referent (John might have opened the window for the benefit of himself); thus the sentence fails to satisfy the semantic constraint. Contrary to this observation, however, my informant said that she finds no difference in acceptability between the (a) and (b) sentences and that both are highly marginal. This comment shows that there are at least some native speakers who think that the verb *open* cannot occur in the BDC, even if the context is set up in the way Takami states. I cannot discuss in this paper why some native speakers consider the (a) sentence to be more acceptable than the (b) one, but I suspect that the acceptability of the BDC is more directly affected by the notion of ready to use than that of benefit. This is because most English native speakers judge BDCs which satisfy the AC to be acceptable, although the judgment may vary among speakers. I do not mean by saying this that the constraint given by Takami should be dismissed. As far as the contrast given above is true, we must say that it should be captured by his constraint.

fails to satisfy the AC and is judged to be unacceptable. What should be noted here is that the fact that (25b) is acceptable shows that even a verb such as *break* can enter into the BDC when an appropriate context is set up to satisfy the AC. These observations lead us to conclude that the AC plays an important role in explaining the acceptability of the certain type of BDC. Moreover, it is strongly suggested that as for verbs which take affected object as the direct object, we cannot decide whether a verb can appear in the construction just by looking into its semantics; rather we must consider whether a verb phrase as a whole satisfy the AC.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the notion of ready to use is closely related with the notion of benefit in the sense that entities which are made more ready to use are usually regarded as benefit. Considered in this light it can be said that in addition to the notion of effectum, the notion of ready to use also counts as a factor which clarifies the notion of benefit. That is, if an action performed by the subject referent makes an entity more ready to use, we usually think that the benefit will exist on the part of a person who receives that entity.

### 3.3. *Where the Two Constraints Meet*

So far, I have shown that the acceptability of the BDC is controlled by the two constraints, the EC and the AC. Given these constraints, it is expected that the fact that the following examples are acceptable should be explained in different ways (see also Wierzbicka (1988:370ff)).

(26) a. John *baked* Mary a cake. [*a cake*: an effected object]

b. John *baked* Mary a potato. [*a potato*: an affected object]

Example (26a) is acceptable because it satisfies the EC; in this sentence the direct object is interpreted as an effected object. On the other hand, (26b) is acceptable because it satisfies the AC; it is a natural consequence that if we bake a raw potato it becomes ready to eat. Although these two constraints neatly explain the acceptability of the BDC, it seems more desirable to account for the acceptability by a single factor. Then, the question to be asked is: is it possible to integrate the two constraints? I argue that the AC can be subsumed under the EC, since affected objects are in fact conceived of as effected objects in the possessional domain of the indirect object referent (see also note 6).<sup>9</sup>

With this idea in mind, let us once again consider the examples given above. Restricting our discussion to Mary's possessional domain, we can now understand that the direct object in each sentence is interpreted as an effected object. As for (26a), there is no doubt that the cake came into existence in Mary's possessional domain after the action.

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<sup>9</sup> I am deeply indebted to Manabu Kusayama for his many valuable comments, which have led me to this proposal.

Turning to (26b), it appears at first sight that the potato is an affected object since in the action of baking it must exist in John's possessional domain prior to the action (otherwise, John cannot cook it). It should be noted, however, that in this sentence *a potato* must refer to a baked potato, but not a raw one. Given this fact, we can say that the direct object in (26b) is conceived of as an effected object; the "baked" potato comes into existence in Mary's possessional domain only after the action has taken place. Moreover, I claim that an entity which is made more ready to use for someone can be viewed as "new" from his or her point of view; the notion of ready to use helps us to conceptualize an affected object as an effected object. I therefore conclude that the EC and AC can be integrated into a single constraint as follows:

(27) Semantic Constraint on the Benefactive Ditransitive Construction:

The BDC is judged to be acceptable to the extent that it is clearly shown that a new entity comes into existence in the possessional domain of the indirect object referent.

As is clear from what we have seen, this constraint is satisfied in two ways: (i) it is satisfied by the lexical information of a verb when that verb lexically selects an effected object as the direct object; and (ii) it is satisfied contextually when a verb takes an affected object as the direct object.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have shown that the acceptability of the BDC is controlled by the two constraints: the EC and the AC. I have also argued that whether a verb can enter into the BDC is determined in two ways: as for verbs which inherently take an effected object as the direct object, they readily occur in the construction; as for verbs which take affected objects as the direct object, they are allowed to appear in the construction to the extent that it is clearly shown that the direct object referent becomes more ready to use as the result of the action. Furthermore, I claimed that the two constraints can be integrated into a single constraint. Given this constraint, it is expected that a verb can enter into the BDC to the extent that a verb by itself or a verb phrase as a whole expresses that a new object comes into existence in the possessional domain of the indirect object referent.

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