

Three Types of Verb Particle Constructions

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Verb particle constructions (henceforth, VPCs) as shown in (1) have fascinated a lot of linguists for more than a century:

- (1) a. John looked the word up.
b. John looked up the word.

VPCs have two types of word orders: The verb-noun-particle order as shown in (1a) and the verb-particle-noun order as shown in (1b).

In the previous researches, two kinds of meanings of VPCs are discussed. One is literal VPCs which have literal meanings as shown in (2):

- (2) Jones pulled the tablecloth off. (Fraser (1974:3))

We can get the meaning of VPCs compositionally. In example (2), to get the meaning of the sentence, we combine the verb's meaning and the particle's: That is, Jones pulled the tablecloth and the tablecloth went off of something such as a table, a box, etc. In case of literal VPCs, we can fully predict the meaning of a sentence just by combining the meanings of a verb and a particle.

The other type of VPCs is idiomatic VPCs. We cannot get the meanings of idiomatic VPCs based on the combining strategy.

- (3) Jones pulled off the deal. (Fraser (1974:3))

The sentence in (3) means that Jones succeeded in his business, and not that Jones pulled the deal and the deal went off of something. In this sense, this types of VPCs are idiomatic. Idiomatic VPCs are discussed by the following researches such as Fraser (1974), Dixon (1982), Ishikawa (1999), and Wurmbrand (2000). Some refer to the idiomatic meaning as a non-literal, metaphoric or figurative meaning.

We, then, argue that aspectual VPCs should be considered. Let us observe the following example as shown in (4):

- (4) Hilary packed up the suitcase. (Jackendoff (2002:76))

The particle *up* in (4) indicates that the event expressed by the matrix verb is completed or finished. Thus, the example in (4) can be rephrased as in (5).

- (5) Hilary packed the suitcase completely.

Ishikawa (1999) claims that VPCs can be classified into three types; i.e. simple combination type, pure idiom type, and hybrid idiom type, on the basis of two criteria; i.e. (i) whether or not particles retain their own meanings when they are combined with verbs, and (ii) whether or not the selectional properties of verbs are changed when they are combined with particles. He assumes that the meanings of particles include not only their literal meanings that indicate space or motion, but

some derivational or figurative meanings like completion; i.e, the result or terminus meanings of particles are included in the meanings of particles. Based on this assumption, he claims that particles which have terminus or result meanings appear in the simple combination type or hybrid idiom type.

However, there seem to be several problems with Ishikawa's classification. Firstly, aspectual VPCs clearly prefer the verb-particle-noun order, as in (6), while literal VPCs prefer the verb-noun-particle as in (7):

- (6) a. He threw the ball up. (Fukui, Kanetani, and Kobukata (2004))
 b. ? He threw up the ball. (Fukui, Kanetani, and Kobukata (2004))
- (7) a. ? John ate the food up.
 b. John ate up the food.

Secondly, an object noun and a particle in literal VPCs have a predicational relationship as in (8), while aspectual VPCs do not, as in (9):

- (8) a. John threw the ball up.
 b. (John threw the ball and,) the ball is up.
- (9) a. Elena drank up the milk. (Jackendoff (2002:76))
 b. * The milk is up.

Thirdly, the meanings of aspectual VPCs do not change with or without the particles as shown in (10). That is, particles in aspectual VPCs add only the meaning of completion or terminus without changing the central meaning of sentences.

- (10) a. It says on the bottle that it kills off all known germs. (CALD)
 b. (?) It says on the bottle that it kills all known germs.
- (11) a. He threw the ball up. (Fukui, Kanetani, and Kobukata (2004))
 b. He threw the ball.

The sentence in (10b) expresses almost the same meaning as the one in (10a) while the sentence in (11b) lacks information of the direction the ball goes to. Fourthly, the gapping test can be applied to literal VPCs, but cannot be applied to aspectual VPCs as shown in (12):

- (12) a. Jones pulled the old table cloth off, and Peters, the new one on.
 (Fraser (1974:2))
 b. * Jones washed the dish up, and Mary, the car down.

From the fact above, we claim that aspectual VPCs constitute a unique class different from literal VPCs or idiomatic VPCs.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Fraser, Bruce (1974) *The Verb-Particle Combination in English*. Taishukan, Tokyo.
- Ishikawa, Kazuhisa (1999) "English Verb-Particle Constructions and V⁰-Internal Structure," *English Linguistics* 16, 329-352.