

Parataxis and *Simpler Syntax*

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1. Overview

The term *parataxis* is typically used to refer to cases in which two sentences or clauses are adjacent to one another without any explicit indication as to the logical or temporal relationship between them. A widely cited example is Julius Caesar's

- (1) *Veni, vidi, vici*
 I-came, I-saw, I-conquered

The temporal sequence of events is not explicitly spelled out in this example, as it would be if each clause were linked to the preceding clause with a temporal adverb.

Either the relationship between the clauses is somehow associated with the particular syntactic structure, that is, it is an aspect of meaning that is determined by the syntactic elements and their configuration, or it is an implicature. I argue that at least for a range of cases of English parataxis, the interpretation is configurationally determined.

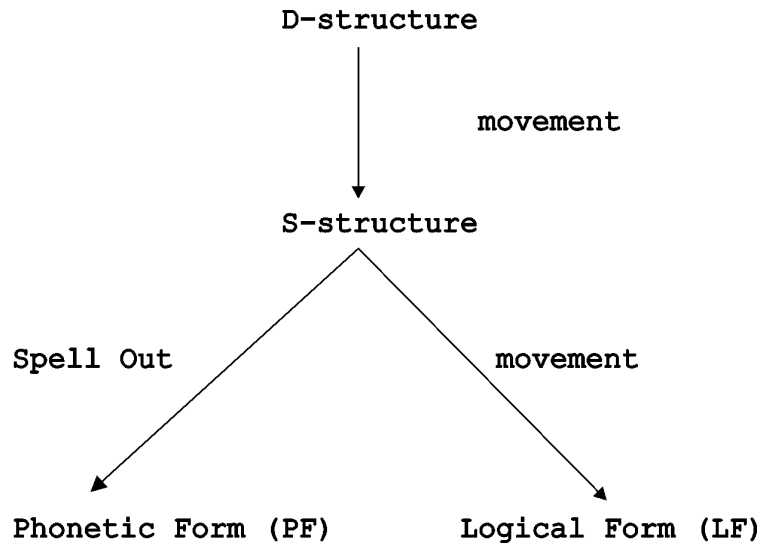
If the meaning is configurational, with what part of the configuration is it associated? Within the general framework of configurationality, we can distinguish strict compositionality and a less strict, constructional approach to the relation between syntactic structure and meaning.

The strict view of compositionality is the standard one in contemporary generative grammar, often referred to as Fregean compositionality (Partee et al. 1990).

Fregean Compositionality (FC): 'The meaning of a compound expression is a function of the meaning of its parts and of the syntactic rules by which they are combined' [Partee et al. 1990].

There are numerous phenomena that appear to present difficulties for this view; nevertheless, it is generally accepted as a guide to syntactic theory construction. It is assumed in standard approaches in generative grammar that there are two (more or less) concrete representations, sound and meaning, that are related to one another by their respective relations to a syntactic representation (or set of syntactic representations). The meaning of an expression is determined by its correspondence to the syntactic representation, as in (2).

(2)



Widely held uniformity assumptions (see Culicover and Jackendoff 2005) lead to the conclusion that there is some component of the syntactic representation for every component of the meaning, and that meanings of larger expressions are built up from the meanings of their constituents on the basis of the syntactic structure. One of the significant consequences of a strong version of this view is that there are invisible elements in sentences that correspond to certain components of meaning. So, taking this view literally, if ‘then’ is part of the meaning of the Caesar example, there is an invisible element in the syntactic representation that means ‘then’.

Culicover and Jackendoff (2005) argue for the Simpler Syntax Hypothesis, which entails a view of the syntax-semantics interface that differs in significant ways from the standard view of Fregean compositionality. Simpler Syntax says that syntactic structure is only as complex as it needs to be to guide interpretation, and does not hold to the stricter view that every aspect of interpretation corresponds to some distinct basic element in the configuration. Simpler Syntax argues for the view that some meaning is strictly compositional and some is constructional. On this view, some cases of parataxis need not be located in a particular syntactic element, but may be a property of the syntactic configuration as a whole (that is, it is a construction in the sense of Kay and Fillmore 1999, Goldberg 1995, and others).

In this paper I argue for the constructional status of a number of cases of English parataxis. The core of the argument is that there are facts about paratactic constructions that show that they are form-meaning correspondences, and not simply (non-truth conditional) implicatures.¹ Hence, these paratactic constructions are members of a rather large set of constructions whose meaning does not fall under the standard view of Fregean compositionality.

¹ I am oversimplifying by excluding implicatures that lead to truth-conditional representations, along the lines proposed by Blutner (1998), Carston (1998) and others. To the extent that such implicatures are licensed by the syntactic configuration, they fall within the realm of forming-meaning correspondences as understood here.

2. Simpler Syntax

2.1. The relation between syntax and semantics²

Fregean Compositionality (henceforth FC) does not appear to hold in those cases where certain aspects of sentence meaning do not seem to correspond to any of the words in a sentence. In sentence (3), one understands Ozzie to be not only in the role of ‘tryer’ but also in the role of ‘drinker’. However, the noun phrase *Ozzie* is not an overt argument of the verb *drink*.

(3) *Ozzie tried not to drink.*

One of the major innovations of mainstream generative grammar was to hypothesize that the meaning of *Ozzie* in the subordinate clause corresponds to an element in the syntactic representation that has meaning, but no form. Such an element appears at a covert level of syntactic structure (‘Deep Structure’ in early work, later ‘Logical Form’). Sentence (3) has the covert form (4), in which the verb *drink* in fact has a subject. This subject is called PRO; it is an unpronounced pronoun whose antecedent is *Ozzie*.

(4) *Ozzie tried [PRO not to drink].*

For relatively straightforward situations such as (3) such an approach is effective and has considerable intuitive appeal. However, in *Simpler Syntax* we argue that applying this strategy systematically to cases where there is meaning that is not matched by overt form leads to unwelcome consequences.

The alternative to FC proposed in *Simpler Syntax* is the following:

Autonomous Semantics: Phrase and sentence meanings are composed from the meanings of the words plus independent principles for constructing meanings, only some of which correlate with syntactic structure.

Simpler Syntax Hypothesis (SSH): Syntactic structure is only as complex as it needs to be to guide interpretation. The most explanatory theory is one that imputes the minimum syntactic structure necessary to mediate between phonology and meaning.

According to SSH, sentence (3) has no hidden syntactic structure. Ozzie is understood as the potential ‘drinker’ in virtue of a principle of semantic interpretation that assigns Ozzie this extra role. The crucial point here is that there are ways to relate this interpretation to the form of a sentence such as (3) without assuming invisible elements and covert levels of representation. There is no principled obstacle to a semantics that has more elaborate structure than the syntax that expresses it. Hence the extra syntactic structure is not necessary.

2.2. Bare Argument Ellipsis

Differences between mainstream theory and SSH emerge in many cases. Here is one brief example in terms of Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE), illustrated in B’s reply to A in example (5).

² This section is adapted from Culicover and Jackendoff 2006.

- (5) *A: Ozzie says that Harriet's been drinking.*
 B: Yeah, scotch.
 B': Really? What?

B's replies conveys the same meanings as the sentences in (6), thus going beyond the meanings of *Yeah* and *scotch*.

- (6) *B: Yeah, Harriet's been drinking scotch.*
 B': Really? What does Ozzie say that Harriet's been drinking?

If all aspects of understanding must be explicit in syntactic structure, it is necessary to posit (i) a complete syntactic structure for B's reply along the lines of (6), and (ii) a syntactic or phonological process that deletes everything but the words *yeah* and *scotch*. This deletion has to be based on syntactic identity with the antecedent of the ellipsis – that is, the relevant portions of A's preceding statement.

In *Simpler Syntax*, such full syntactic structure and deletions are unnecessary. The syntactic structure of B's reply is just the string of two words, and its interpretation is determined by grafting the meanings of the two words onto an appropriate place in the meaning of A's statement.

There is insufficient space here to work through the details of why we believe that the *Simpler Syntax* approach is the right way to account for the correspondence between form and meaning. The basic reason is that in many cases, the meaning associated with a particular construction cannot be accounted for on the basis of any plausible hypothesis about invisible syntactic structure. For example, on the standard assumption that ellipsis involves deletion of an empty constituent, and not just a string of words and phrases, it is not clear how to derive the syntactic structures of the following perfectly well-formed instances of BAE such that the structures match the antecedent in the right way.

- (7)
 (a) *A: I'm hungry.*
 B: How about a pizza?
 (b) *A: Is Sviatoslav pro- or anti-Communist these days?*
 B: Pro.

In (b), for example, the syntactic structure would have to be that of a complete sentence with the formative *pro* topicalized out of *pro-Communist*. The remaining structure would be phonologically empty, and would correspond to *Sviatoslav is [____-Communist] these days*. Topicalization out of a word just for the sake of BAE is highly problematic. For much more extensive discussion and many examples, see Culicover and Jackendoff 2005.

Assuming that *Simpler Syntax* is essentially correct, in those cases where the meaning appears to go beyond what can be attributed to the words and how they are arranged into a structure, there must be rules of interpretation that supply the additional meaning based on the overt syntactic structure itself.

This is, of course, the kind of situation that is claimed to hold in cases of parataxis – see the treatment in Culicover and Jackendoff 1999 and *Simpler Syntax* of the comparative correlative construction. There we argue that in cases such as the following,

the correlational meaning is associated with the paratactic concatenation of the two clauses in virtue of their idiosyncratic properties (namely, *the...the...*).

- (8) *The more I eat, the hungrier I get.*

Thus there is a mismatch between the syntactic structure and the semantic structure: there are components of the semantic structure that do not correspond to elements of the syntactic structure, in violation of strict Fregean compositionality.

The remainder of this paper considers a number of other cases where such mismatches between form and meaning appear to hold. It appears, in fact, that classical parataxis is a special case of a widespread phenomenon that is realized in a number of different ways.

3. Examples of English sentential parataxis

Many of the following examples³ are fixed expressions, proverbs and sayings, but some are productive. The more or less productive ones are marked in boldface. In brackets there are some approximate schematic paraphrases of the interpretations.

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| (9) | <u>AdjP</u> | |
| (a) | <i>once bitten, twice shy</i> | [If one is A, one is B.] |
| (b) | <i>like father, like son.</i> | [A and B are alike.] |
| (10) | <u>VP</u> | |
| (a) | <i>Easy come, easy go.</i> | [Things come easily and go easily.] |
| (b) | <i>Waste not, want not</i> | [If you don't waste, you don't want.] |
| (c) | <i>Easy up, easy down.</i>
<i>Easy in, easy out.</i>
<i>Easy on, easy off.</i> | [It goes A easily and it goes B easily.] |
| (11) | <u>PP</u> | |
| (a) | <i>In for a penny, in for a pound.</i> | [If one is A, then one is B.] |
| (b) | <i>Out of sight, out of mind.</i> | [If something is A, then it is B.] |
| (12) | <u>NP</u> | |
| (a) | <i>Another day, another dollar.</i> | [It is A and one will get B.] |
| (b) | <i>No tickee, no shirtee.</i> | [If one has A then one gets B.] |
| (c) | <i>No pain, no gain.</i> | [If one has A, then one gets B.] |
| (d) | <i>Nothing ventured, nothing gained.</i> | [If there is A, then there is B.] |
| (e) | <i>No shirt, no shoes, no service.</i> | [If one has A and B, then one gets C.] |
| (f) | <i>Ten bucks, a seat in the balcony.</i> | [If one has A, then one gets B.] |
| (13) | <u>Three VPs</u> | |
| | <i>Live fast, love hard, die young.</i> | [One As and Bs, then one Cs.] |
| (14) | <i>Eat well, stay fit, die anyway.</i> ⁴ | [One As and Bs, then one Cs.] |

³ I am grateful to David Dowty (p.c.) for the majority of these examples.

- (15)
- (a) *You pays yer money, you takes yer chances.*
[A and B.]
- (b) ***Thursday morning comes, your car gets towed.***
[When A, B.]
- (16) *It never fails! I sit down to dinner, the phone rings.*
[When A, B]
- (17) *Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.*
[If you A, then B, if you C, then D.]
- (18) ***You have the whole weekend off, it rains.***
You have to work on the weekend,
the weather turns out great. [Whenever A, then B.]
- (19) *Spare the rod and spoil the child.* [If you A, then you B.]
Step on a crack and break your mother's back.
[If you A, then you B.]
- (20) VP (and) S (Pseudo-imperatives) and NP and S⁵
- (a) *Give him an inch (and) he'll take*
a mile. [If you A, then B.]
- (b) ***Take care of your pennies (and) your***
dollars will take care of your
widow's next husband. (Internet) [If you A, then B.]
- (c) ***Another beer (and) I'll be too drunk***
to drive home. [If F(a) then B.]
- (d) ***One more step (and) I'll shoot.*** [If F(a), then B.]
- (21) Simple concatenation: S,S; NP, NP; XP, S
- (a) *Two's company, three's a crowd.* [A but B.]
- (b) *Here today, gone tomorrow.* [A and B.]
- (c) ***You win some, you lose some.*** [A and B.]
- (d) ***So many men, so little time.*** [There are/is A and there are/is B.]
- (e) *Penny wise, pound foolish.* [One is A but one is B.]
- (f) *Jack of all trades, master of none.* [S/he is A and B.]
- (g) ***Kiss me, I'm Italian.*** [A because B.]
- (h) ***Kiss me, I get a rash.*** [If you A, then B]
- (22)
- (a) ***All cars with Ohio license plates,***
left side of road. [If you are an element in A, then you
should have property B.]
- (b) ***Speakers of English, line/group 3.*** [If you are an element in A, then you
should be an element in B.]

⁴ From a list of "new proverbs" on the Internet. Another possible interpretation, although not the intended one, is *One A's, then one B's and C's*.

⁵ See Culicover (1970; 1972).

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|-----|--|---------------------------------------|
| (c) | <i>Over six feet tall, take a seat.</i> | [If you are an element in A, then B.] |
| (d) | <i>Cold hands, warm heart.</i> | [If you have A, then you have B.] |
| (e) | <i>High hopes, low expectations.</i> | [One has A, but B.] |

Beyond this, there are a few proposals in the technical literature that certain constructions are paratactic. For instance, de Vries (2006) has argued that appositive relative clauses are paratactic, in the sense that the meaning of coordination is not explicitly expressed in the construction. (Although De Vries proposes that there is actually invisible structure that accounts for the parataxis.) Gaertner (2001) has discussed an interesting restrictive relative construction in German which he argues must be paratactic; although it is apparently a subordinate clause, it shows V2 and not V-final, which would be expected in a German subordinate clause.

- (23) *Ich war in einem Land, [da kostet das Bier ein Vermögen].*
I was in a country [there costs the beer a fortune]
'I was in a country where beer costs a fortune.'

Culicover and Jackendoff (1999; 2005) argue that coordination may have the interpretation of subordination.

- (24)
- (a) *Mary comes in and all the boys go crazy.*
= 'When Mary comes in, all the boys go crazy.'
- (b) *George shows up in a nice car, and all the girls want to ride in it.*

This is not strictly speaking parataxis, but it is an instance of a form-meaning mismatch similar to that of parataxis.

The productive cases of parataxis in (9)-(22) that do not involve complete sentences are of particular interest because they illustrate the interactions between the construction of elliptical meaning and constructional interpretation. As we can see, there are a number of possible interpretations that can be associated with [A,B]. They are systematically ambiguous with regard to the relation between A and B. This fact raises an interesting question: are there in fact different meanings associated with the paratactic construction, or is there a single generic interpretation that is made more specific through implicature? At the end of the paper, some evidence is given that suggests that that both possibilities exist at the same time, which poses an interesting puzzle.

4. Other cases where meaning is not in the string

One characteristic of parataxis is that there is meaning that does not explicitly correspond to any overt lexical items or morphology. This phenomenon is widespread in language -- here are a few salient cases.

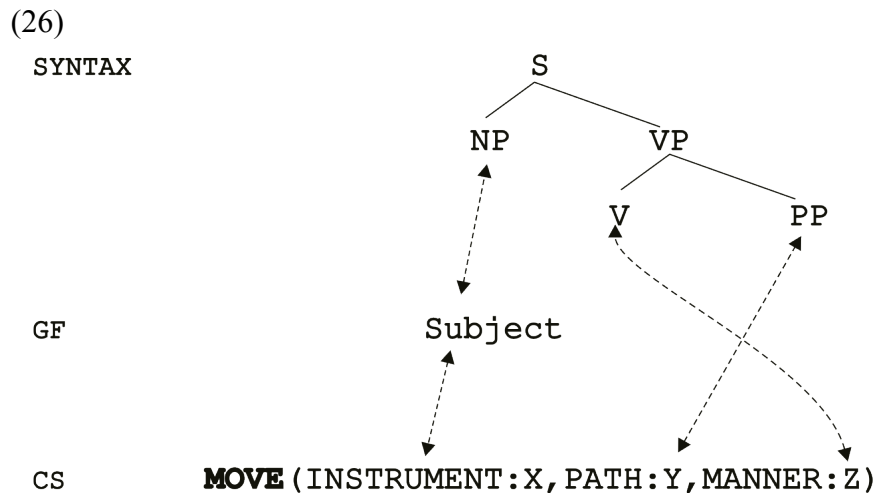
4.1. Verbal coercion

As already suggested, in some constructions part of the meaning is associated with the complex structure itself. The constructional parts of the meaning are noted in boldface.

- (25)
- (a) *The **ball** **wobbled** across the pitch.*

- [The ball **went** across the pitch **in a** wobbling **manner**.]
- (b) Mary shoplifted Bill a new Ipod.
[Mary **acquired** a new Ipod **for** Bill **by** shoplifting **it**.]
- (c) Is the Democratic Candidate Trying to Out-Bush Bush on Iraq, the War on Terrorism, Israel, and Cuba?⁶
[Is the Democratic Candidate trying to act **more like** Bush **than** Bush **himself** with respect to ...?]
- (d) How to out-Nixon Nixon's people.⁷
[How to **act more like** Nixon **than** Nixon's people.]
- (e) Mary studied her head off.
[Mary studied **extensively**.]
- (f) George drank himself to death.
[George drank **so much that** he **died**.]

To take just one example, the correspondence for (25a) is characterized by a lexical entry roughly of the form in (26). There is a mapping between the syntactic structure and the conceptual structure (CS), mediated by the linking of syntactic arguments to grammatical functions (GFs) and of GFs to CS arguments. (See *Simpler Syntax* for details and discussion.)



The component of the meaning represented as **MOVE** in CS is not explicitly associated with any part of the string, as can be seen by the fact that there is no link between **MOVE** and any element in the syntactic structure.

Examples (25c,d) are particularly instructive. They productively use an otherwise semi-productive derivational device of English morphology, *out+X*.

- (27)
- (a) [_V *out+X*]
- (b) *run* ~ *outrun*

⁶ www.commondreams.org/views04/0513-03.htm

⁷ http://calbears.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_20031006/ai_n12724792

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------|---|------------------|
| | <i>sell</i> | ~ | <i>outsell</i> |
| | <i>rank</i> | ~ | <i>outrank</i> |
| | <i>number</i> | ~ | <i>outnumber</i> |
| | <i>last</i> | ~ | <i>outlast</i> |
| (c) | <i>fox</i> | ~ | <i>outfox</i> |
| | <i>flank</i> | ~ | <i>outflank</i> |

But in the case of *to outXX*, there is nothing associated with the name of the individual that denotes ‘act in a manner like X’. Example (25d) is of the form *to out-X Y*. This case pushes the construction a little further, since in this case X is merely associated with Y. The construction is related to the one that produces verbs such as *to Nixon*.

- (28)
- (a) *Bush in His Second Term: How Long Until He's "Nixoned?"*⁸
- (b) *A lot of Georgians didn't like Barnes, and when you put that together with the Republicans, he Dick Nixoned himself right out of office.*⁹

In the first case, *to Nixon X* is transitive; it is used here in the passive. It means ‘to treat X in the same way that Nixon was treated.’ In the second case, *to (Dick) Nixon oneself* means ‘to act in the manner that Nixon acted and suffer similar consequences.’

In this case, we have several productive lexical rules of verb formation. They are not instances of parataxis, *per se*, but they do highlight the fact that there are components of meaning that do not correspond uniquely to elements of the syntactic structure. The word *Nixon* does not actually mean ‘to behave like Nixon’, it refers to the person Nixon. Its use as a verb or in a verb to signify ‘behave like Nixon’ has to be associated with the entire configuration, in this case the structures

- (29)
- (a) [_V out [_N Nixon]]
- (b) [_V [_N Nixon]]

Thus we see that there is constructional meaning in morphology. The meaning is associated with the particular configuration, and cannot be completely decomposed into the overt elements that make up the construction.

4.2.Compounding

Compound nouns offer a very different but compelling example of constructional meaning. In a sense, an N+N compound is paratactic, in that there is no explicit marker of the relationship between the nouns. Thus, it is constructional meaning. As in the case of the paratactic constructions already observed, there is a range of possible (more or less natural) interpretations that can be associated with this construction.

- (30)
- (a) *hair brush* ‘a brush for hair’
 ‘a brush made of hair’
- (b) *hair shirt* ‘a shirt made from hair’

⁸ www.pkblogs.com/diplomadic/2004/09/bush-in-his-second-term-how-long-until.html

⁹ www.washingtonmonthly.com/mt/mt-comments.cgi?entry_id=1241

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|--|
| | | <i>'a shirt that looks like hair'</i> |
| | | <i>'a shirt that is the color of hair'</i> |
| (c) | <i>hair color</i> | <i>'the color of hair'</i> |
| | | <i>'a color similar to that of hair'</i> |
| (d) | <i>hair painting</i> | <i>'a painting that looks like hair'</i> |
| | | <i>'a painting that contains hair'</i> |
| | | <i>'a painting made using hair'</i> |
| (e) | <i>hair follicle</i> | <i>'a follicle that is part of (a) hair'</i> |
| (f) | <i>hair salon</i> | <i>'a salon that deals with hair'</i> |
| (g) | <i>hair specialist</i> | <i>'a specialist who works on hair'</i> |
| (h) | <i>hair salesman</i> | <i>'someone who sells hair'</i> |
| (i) | <i>hair treatment</i> | <i>'treatment of/for hair'</i> |
| (j) | <i>hair dog</i> | <i>'a dog that searches for hair'</i> |
| | | <i>'a dog that has a lot of hair'</i> |
| (k) | <i>hair spray</i> | <i>'spray for hair'</i> |
| (l) | <i>hair cutter</i> | <i>'someone who cuts hair'</i> |
| | | <i>'something that cuts hair'</i> |

If we substitute another word for *hair* we get perfectly good English compound nouns, some of which have a natural interpretation with respect to everyday experience, and some of which do not.

- (31)
- | | |
|-----|--|
| (a) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage brush</i> |
| | <i>'a brush for water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a brush made of water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (b) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage shirt</i> |
| | <i>'a shirt made from water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a shirt that looks like water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a shirt that is the color of water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a shirt used for (working with/in) water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (c) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage color</i> |
| | <i>'the color of water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a color similar to that of water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (d) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage painting</i> |
| | <i>'a painting that looks like water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a painting that contains water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| | <i>'a painting made using water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (e) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage follicle</i> |
| | <i>'a follicle that is part of (a) water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (f) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage salon</i> |
| | <i>'a salon that deals with water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (g) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage specialist</i> |
| | <i>'a specialist who works on water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (h) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage salesman</i> |
| | <i>'someone who sells water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |
| (i) | <i>water/mud/wood/sausage treatment</i> |
| | <i>'treatment of water/mud/wood/sausage'</i> |

- (j) *water/mud/wood/sausage dog*
 ‘a dog that searches for water/mud/wood/sausage’
 N.B. ‘a dog shaped like a sausage’
- (k) *water/mud/wood/sausage spray*
 ‘spray for water/mud/wood/sausage’
- (l) *water/mud/wood/sausage cutter*
 ‘someone who cuts water/mud/wood/sausage’
 ‘something that cuts water/mud/wood/sausage’

One can play this game forever, with occasionally entertaining results. Note, for example, that when we introduce a noun that denotes an object with a particular shape, the head noun may be interpreted as something with that shape, as in the case of *sausage dog*. There is no evidence to suggest that the syntactic structure here is any more complex than N+N, nor is there any apparent reason to believe that the meanings are not conventionally associated with the compounds in some cases, and productively assigned to them in other cases.

But the alternative that must always be considered in such cases, and one that arises in the case of clausal parataxis, is that there is always a fixed but very generic meaning associated with the construction that could in principle be located in some invisible element. In the case of N+N compounds, this element could be something like ‘pertaining to’. Hence *sausage dog* would have the literal meaning ‘dog pertaining to sausage’, and whether this refers to a dog that eats sausage, or is shaped like a sausage, or guards sausage, or whatever, is a matter of convention only, and not a matter of lexical meaning.

It is certainly possible that in the absence of a standard use for N+N, the generic interpretation is in fact its meaning. However, when the N+N compound is used regularly in the language and not simply made up on the spot, the interpretations associated with particular N+N appear to be truly meanings, and not implicatures, in the sense that unlike implicatures, they cannot be defeated. If one says

- (32) *That is a sausage hat.*

intending to mean that it is a hat shaped like a sausage, one is not simply saying that there is some relationship between the hat and sausage. If it turns out that it is not shaped like a sausage, the sentence is false, even if it also turns out that the hat is made out of sausage and is therefore a ‘sausage hat’ in another sense. The sentence has the same status with respect to truth as any other ambiguous sentence. But if we are in fact dealing with ambiguity, it seems natural to say that the different meanings associated with N+N are not associated with different complex syntactic structures, but are different interpretations associated with the same simple N+N structure.¹⁰

¹⁰ Baker (1988) and Hale and Keyser (1993) argue for rich syntactic structure underlying derivational morphology. For discussion and arguments against this general approach, see *Simpler Syntax*.

5. Syntax-semantics mismatches

Let us conclude by considering more closely the claim that the interpretations that we assign to these constructions are really semantic, and not inferences. As noted earlier, Culicover and Jackendoff (1999; 2005) argue that coordination may have the interpretation of subordination. The cases considered in section 3 have the same property, in that the syntactic structure does not give any hint as to what the conceptual structure might be. For example, we have seen the following.

- (33)
- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| (a) | <i>Thursday morning comes, your car gets towed.</i> | [<i>When A, B.</i>] |
| (b) | <i>Kiss me, I'm Italian.</i> | [<i>A because B.</i>] |
| (c) | <i>Two's company, three's a crowd.</i> | [<i>A but B.</i>] |
| (d) | <i>You win some, you lose some.</i> | [<i>A and B.</i>] |

The conceptual structure relation is, in general, underspecified with respect to the syntactic structure.

The evidence that what we are dealing with here is really conceptual structure is that there are linguistic relations, in particular, binding, that are sensitive to the hierarchical organization of semantic structure. In *Simpler Syntax* and elsewhere we have argued that binding is sensitive to the hierarchical relations in conceptual structure, not syntactic structure.¹¹ In this way, we are able to account for the following judgments in the paratactic constructions.¹²

- (34)
- | | |
|-----|--|
| (a) | <i>His_i horse loses, every bettor_i goes ballistic.</i>
[meaning: <i>Every bettor_i goes ballistic when his_i horse loses.</i>]
<i>*Every bettor_i's horse loses, he_i goes ballistic.</i>
[meaning: <i>He_i goes ballistic when every bettor_i's horse loses.</i>] |
| (b) | <i>The cops come to his_i house, every guy_i hides in the bathroom.</i>
[meaning: <i>Every guy_i hides in the bathroom when the cops come to his_i house.</i>]
<i>*The cops come to every guy's_i house, he_i hides in the bathroom.</i>
[meaning: <i>*He_i hides in the bathroom when the cops come to every guy's_i house.</i>] |
- (35)
- | | |
|-----|---|
| (a) | <i>*Kiss every waiter_i, he_i's Italian.</i>
[meaning: <i>*Kiss every waiter_i because he_i's Italian.</i>]
<i>*Kiss him_i, every waiter_i is Italian.</i>
[meaning: <i>*Kiss him_i, because every waiter_i is Italian.</i>] |
| (b) | <i>*Kiss every waiter_i, he_i sings in Italian.</i>
[meaning: <i>*If you kiss every waiter_i, he_i sings in Italian.</i>]
<i>Kiss him_i, every waiter_i sings in Italian.</i> |

¹¹ In many cases the hierarchical relations in syntax and CS are the same, which is why it appears that syntactic structure constrains the binding relations.

¹² The subscripts are used here in the standard way, to indicate intended coreference or binding.

[meaning: *If you kiss him_i, every waiter_i sings in Italian.*]

(36)

(a) *No lawyer_i is good company, his_i boss is worse.

[meaning: *No lawyer_i is good company, but his_i boss is worse.]

(b) *Every lawyer_i wins some, she_i loses some.

[meaning: *Every lawyer_i wins some, and she_i loses some.]

The binding relations in the paratactic examples are close if not identical to those in the corresponding paraphrases. Since the paratactic examples are structurally indistinguishable from one another, at least on the surface, it is reasonable to attribute the binding possibilities to the semantic interpretations, and not to the syntax.

6. Conclusion – simpler syntax

The perspective of *Simpler Syntax* is that meaning is associated with configuration, but that there is not always a one-to-one mapping between the syntactic structure and the semantic structure in the sense of strict Fregean compositionality. The cases that have been considered here are constructional, in the sense that the meaning is associated with the configuration, but cannot be located in particular words or formatives. There are instances of parataxis that appear to fit this classification. They have on the surface the form A-B, and their interpretation is some more complex and contentful function of A and B. I have argued that at least some of these interpretive functions are represented in conceptual structure and are not the result of pragmatic inference. These constructions are therefore ambiguous and not simply vague or underdetermined.

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