

SEEDS OF VARIATION AND CHANGE

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1.
 - complex sign types (idioms and constructions) [**comsits**], each with:
 - formal side (assemblages of properties, including involvement of specific lexical items) and meaning side;
 - discriminating comsits,
 - refining the details--of form, meaning, use in context (discourse and social): generalizing from exemplars of the comsit available to you
2. How does refinement proceed on the formal side?
3. point (A), an observation: The **input is skewed**, the stimulus impoverished
 - 3.1. elements contributing to a comsit have background frequencies that skew learners' data
 - 3.2. exemplars of a comsit tend to cluster in a few subtypes, the **seeds**, which do not necessarily constitute a (whole) natural class
4. 'stranded *to*' phenomenon
 - 4.1. Verb Phrase Ellipsis leaving infinitival *to* as remainder; parenthetical interruption
 - 4.2. Nelson W. Aldrich Jr., 'Out of Retirement', New York Times Magazine, 8/5/01, p. 12:
 - "*I don't plan to retire,*" they say. "*Besides, Social Security will be such a pittance by then, I won't be able to.*"
 - *I work because I have to, not just because I want to.*
 - 4.3. Zwicky 1982: 157 examples, mostly from edited informal interviews (152 with VPE), plus judgments on 21 examples from 74 subjects
82% of collected examples have subject-controlled predicates,
57% with the three verbs *want, have, used* (**really high-frequency contexts**); other quasimodals amalgamating phonetically with *to* (Pullum 1997) - *ought, got, be going, supposed* - occur stranded at roughly a tenth the rate of these three;
no examples at all of unquestionably acceptable types: *hate to, be likely to, prefer to*
 - 4.4. Riehemann (2001:45-7) search of New York Times corpus: 85%, 52%;
no occurrences of stranded *hard to, whether to* (non-stranded: ca. 15k, 8k, respectively);
skewing: '... while *able to* is about twice as frequent in the corpus as *used to*, there are about 6 times more stranded occurrences of *used to* than of *able to*.' (45-6)
 - 4.5. virtually everyone seems to generalize from the three seeds, to cover not only a large collection of subject-controlled predicates, but also *not* and some *wh* words (*how*)
 - 4.6. but there are still constraints, both structural (**You can try it, but I believe to will cause trouble*) and lexical, targeting *be* (**He was not to speak Danish, but you were to*)
 - 4.7. 'exemplar-based learning strategies' (Markman 1989:63) in children's categorization and naming
5. point (B), another observation: There is **enormous variation** in the grammars of different speakers; the details of 'the same' comsit are strikingly different for different speakers.
 - 5.1. stranded *to*
 - VP Condition: % ...*it was awfully nice of Helen to*, % ...*it seems excessive always to*, % ...*they persuaded Quentin to*
 - Personal Subject Condition: % ...*I don't think it would help to*, % ...*I don't think it's*

possible to

5.2. Auxiliary Reduction (Kaisse 1985:46-53): preceding context

- √subject, regardless of length, even if not an NP
The person you're talking to's going to be bored.
Happy's what you're going to be.
- √single-word *wh* expression, even if not the subject
What's Kim eating?
plus multi-word *wh*-containing NPs
% *What soup's Kim eating?*
or plus multi-word *wh* expressions in general
% *Who from Chicago's going to the party?*
- √deictic adverbs
Here's/There's the answer!
- √(some) subordinators: relativizer *that*, adverbial *so*
the dog that's on your porch
I'm tired, and so's my dog.
plus (certain instances of) comparative *than*
% *The police are using more force than's really necessary.*
- % some other fronted constituents
% *I haven't been to Japan, and neither's Lee.*
- % inversion of non-subjects
% *Speaking tonight's our star reporter.*
% *In the garden's an Italian fountain.*

really high-frequency contexts: pronoun subjects - *I'm, it's, who's*, etc.

[for review of the analyses that have been proposed, see Wescoat (2002:ch. 3)]

5.3. quasi-serial verbs (*Go see who's at the door*: Pullum 1990): V1 (*go/come* etc.) V2 (open)

- **really high-frequency contexts:** base-form V1, esp. imperative
I expect you to go see who's at the door.
We made him go see who was at the door.
- finite V1, subject to Inflection Condition (identical to base form)
√ *Whenever the bell rings, I go see who's at the door.*
(* *Whenever the bell rang, I went see/saw who's at the door.*
V2: governed base form *see* / agreeing form *saw*
- non-finite V1, still subject to Inflection Condition
% *I have come put water on your plants whenever they needed it.*
- V2 governed, agreeing, either, neither
? *I have come visit/visited them whenever I could.*
- judgment task (82 subjects) suggests that almost every logically possible variety exists

6. point (C): Point **(B) follows from (A)**, at least in part. Differences in grammars have their sources in differences in the input (even if the inputs are samplings from the same population, small differences can be crucial if they involve especially noticeable data), or in differences in the way learners generalize from the skewed sample they get, or of course both.

6.1. Unless the way is absolutely barred, as with the asyntactic idiom *by and large*, everyone seems to extrapolate from the seeds of comsits, but in many different directions and to greater or lesser degrees

6.2. The evidence of actual examples seems to override the requirements of general rules:

stranded *whether to, not to*, etc.

7. **family resemblance** effect: generalization in several directions within a single variety; well known in semantics

7.1. children's acquisition of vocabulary

7.2. semantic change:

- *bucket brigade*, involving chains of people, buckets of water, and putting out fires
- extended senses keep emergency situation, no longer restricted to fires
- WNI3 extended sense: chains in emergency situations, humans not nec. involved ('any chain (as of persons) acting to meet an emergency')
- RHDEL extended sense: emergency and human action, chains not nec. involved (cite: 'Seeing the two guests of honor bickering, the rest of the group formed a bucket brigade to calm them.')

8. point (D): Differences in individual grammars are then **windows on 'universal grammar'**, since every idiolect is a possible language. The individual grammars provide precious evidence about the relevant dimensions of language structure, including evidence about universal constraints.

- generalize from the seeds of stranded *to* on the basis of the phonological properties of these seeds?
- Principle of Phonology-Free Syntax (Pullum & Zwicky 1988) says NO
- unattested: extensions from *want/have/used* to other subject-controlled verbs with initial w (*wish*) h (*hate*) y (*yearn*), esp. monosyllables, but excluding, e.g., *love, need, try, intend*

9. point (E), which follows from (B): The interpretation of **a single example is inscrutable** (even assuming that the example is not an inadvertent error)--inscrutable not only to linguists, but also to other speakers. What to make of the following?

9.1. *I'd like to make whatever contribution that I can.* (from Zwicky 2002)

9.2. *The results speak for themselves.* (from Joel Wallenberg, 2001)

9.3. *She's going to San Francisco and sign books at Linux World.* (AMZ, 8/29/01)

9.4. *The problem is, is that we can't find the evidence.* (from Massam 1999)

9.5. *The rose calendar from which the rose photo comes from.* (EDZ, 9/24/02)

9.6. [child asks for item at Izzy's Bagels] A: *They don't have.* (from JW, 2002)

9.7. *She also tried turn the attention away from herself.* (from Martin Jansche, HPSG-L mailing list, 4/5/01)

9.8. *I'm so not going there.* (poster on soc.motss, 1/8/02)

10. point (F): Not surprisingly, given (B), many speakers have varieties with **alternative versions** of the 'same' comsit: *I have come visit/visited them whenever I could.*

11. point (G): Not surprisingly, given (A)--though many linguists find this very surprising, indeed unacceptable--the conditions on many comsits are **disjunctive**, a collection of disparate formal contexts (see Appendix); the comsits are **polycentric**.

11.1. idioms

- Riehemann (2001:ch. 3): though an idiom generally has a **canonical form** (which dominates the data statistically, is reflected in the way dictionaries and speakers refer to the idiom, and serves as the seed for learning), some have more than one.

- cats, bags, and secrets: *let the cat out of the bag* (15 exx.), *the cat be out of the bag* (14 exx.)

• at the mercy of the meat-eaters: *throw to the wolves* (39 exx.) / *lions* (11 exx.); only 1 ea. of *tigers, sharks, dogs*

11.2. constructions

• Auxiliary Reduction as above (5.2), despite heroic attempts to see the phenomenon as unitary (Kaisse 1985; see also Anderson & Lightfoot (in press)); stranded *to* in *whether to, not to*, beside other contexts, as in (6.2) (cf. Lobeck's (1995) program to see the phenomenon in unitary terms, involving binding conditions)

• linguists just love generalizations, perhaps too ardently

12. sources of polycentricity (cf. Lakoff 1986):

12.1. separate motivations for similarly functioning elements: What do dogs, children under 12, and military men in uniform have in common? They all get half fares on Swiss trains. cf. Appendix, secs. 5 and 6

12.2. historical unity, followed by radiative extension (producing family resemblance) and then split: AuxRed, presumably

13. another source of inscrutability, and future polycentricity: creative, one-time, extensions:

13.1. lexical subcategories: *While Chinese dorks were masturbating how great their Chinese character inventions were, Koreans took a step further to educate the common people.*

(sci.lang posting, 10/8/02; cf. *mental masturbation* 'unproductive self-indulgent thought or talk')

13.2. idioms: cat/bag/secret exx. collected by Riehemann in 2001

• *The moral dilemma for these three is how much they should allow the cat out of the bag.*

• *...it is a good thing that this particular cat has been released from the bag.*

• *...and that's because she forced the cat out of the bag.*

14. point (H): The collection of seeds of a comsit will tend to maintain itself through time, will tend to **persevere**; the seeds of stranded *to* have maintained themselves for at least a generation, from my data collection by hand ca. 1980 through Riehemann's corpus searches by computer ca. 2000.

15. point (I): However, the assortment of different grammars extrapolated from these seeds serves as a **reservoir of variants** that can then spread throughout the population of speakers in the usual ways--by chance, by spread on social grounds, or by spread on the basis of the communicative values of the variants.

15.1. candidate for chance: GoToGo (9.3)

• progressive motional *go* (with goal adverbial) + *and* + base-form VP

• *I'm going back and tell Terry and Gottlieb they can go to the devil...*

(from Sinclair Lewis's 1925 *Arrowsmith*, cited by Denison 1998:311)

• 'Examples of analogical creation in syntax are harder to find, though the mechanism surely works here as in morphology. The recent colloquial pattern *I'm going home and eat...*' (Hockett 1958:428)

• early extension to *come*: *I'm coming over there and drag you out myself* (1934 movie *It Happened One Night*, courtesy of DD), and many others

• sporadic extension to other verbs: *I'm taking him to the Sheriff and make sure he's destroyed* (1939 movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, DD again); *I'll be turning the key and see if it works* (1997 DD telephone attestation)

• cf. extension of quasi-serials (5.3) to verbs other than *go* and *come*: *run, hurry*, etc.

15.2. spread on social grounds, from people you believe (or want) yourself to be like, away from people you believe (or want) yourself to be unlike, or from accommodation to

frequent interlocutors (whatever your opinions): GenX_{so} (9.8) as obvious candidate, spreading perhaps from seeds involving following VPs with *not* and with time location expressions (*That's so 1997*)

15.3. spread on the basis of communicative value (clarity/emphasis, ease/brevity, regularity/generalality, in particular)

- clarity/emphasis motive in Isis (9.4). with (possible) seed

The thing/problem/issue/etc. is, is that...

in PrepDouble (9.5): *this world in which we live in...*

- ease/brevity motive in JOO (Jewish Object Omission, 9.6): *Don't let!*

• regularity/generalality motive in quasi-serial verb construction (5.3): over a few centuries, the quasi-serial verb construction has spread from imperatives to bare infinitive forms in general and then, for almost all speakers, to some wider class of contexts

APPENDIX. DISJUNCTIVITY

1. in the distribution of allophones: English glottal stop [ʔ], e.g. in
 - (optional) variant of syllable-final /t/, as in *hat*, *coatrack*, etc. (alternating with [tʰ], etc.)
 - obligatory variant of intervocalic /t/, between accented syllabic and unaccented syllabic n, as in *cotton*, *button*, etc.
 - in the exclamation *uh-oh*
 - as hiatus avoidance between words, as in *Is Anna [ʔ] able?*
2. in the realization of affixes: English suffix /z/, e.g. in
 - noun plural in *birds* etc.
 - noun possessive in *bird's* etc.
 - verb 3rd sg present in *considers* etc.
 - (nonstandard) optional suffix in *anyways* etc.
 - hypocoristic suffix in *Babs*, *Wills*, etc.
3. in the distribution of 'shapes': Welsh soft mutation, e.g. in
 - objects of certain prepositions, e.g. *ar* 'on', *i* 'to', *heb* 'without'
 - direct objects of inflected (but not periphrastic) verbs, as in *Gwelais i gi* 'I saw a dog'
 - adjective after fem sg (but not fem pl or masc) noun, as in *gardd fawr* 'a large garden'
 - noun after (but not before, except as above) modifying adjective, as in *hen gi* 'an old dog'
 - bare NP adverbials, as in *bob dydd* 'every day'(Ball & Müller 1992:15-19 list 23 types of contexts)
4. in the distribution of inflectional forms: English *-ing*, e.g. in
 - progressives (*Kim is singing* tunes in French)
 - complements to intransitive verbs of temporal aspect (*Kim started singing* tunes in English)
 - nominal gerunds (*Kim's singing* tunes in French annoys me)
 - exclamatives (*Kim singing* tunes in French! Who would have thought?)
 - adverbial VPs with *go* and *come* (*Kim goes singing* tunes in French every weekend)(Pullum & Zwicky 1999:253f. list 25 types of syntactic contexts)
5. in the distribution of constituent structure types: English subject-auxiliary inversion, e.g. in
 - yes-no and information questions (*Is Kim* singing French tunes? Why *is Kim* singing French tunes?)

- formal counterfactuals (***Were Kim** singing French tunes, I would be delighted*)
 - in tags with *so* (*Dana is singing French tunes, and so **is Kim***)
 - (optionally) in reduced complements of *than* and *as* (*Kim is more talkative than **is my friend Dana** ~ Kim is more talkative than **my friend Dana is***)
6. in the inventory of constituent structure types eligible to serve in some syntactic function: English subjects, e.g.
- ordinary NPs (***Kim/My best friend** prefers sushi to burritos*)
 - finite and non-finite clauses (***That pigs can't fly** astonishes me, **For pigs to be able to fly** would astonish me*)
 - expletive *there* (***There** are few things that would astonish me*)
 - various constituent types in inverted pseudoclefts (***Happy is what I am this week, Eat a big dinner is what I did last night***)
 - various constituent types in cleftoid constructions (***Under the bedspread** is a terrible place to hide your lover, **From noon to 3** would be a great time to meet*)
7. in the distribution of valency sets: English subject-predicative relations, e.g.
- plain finite clauses (***Kim is crazy as a bedbug***)
 - subject-auxiliary inversion clauses (*Is **Kim crazy as a bedbug?***)
 - fronted predicatives (***Crazy as a bedbug** though **Kim is**, we are not impressed*)
 - absolutes (*With **Kim crazy as a bedbug**, we were all distracted*)
 - causative complements (*We soon had **Kim crazy as a bedbug***)

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