

Extension and its Limits

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Edited by

Grzegorz Drożdż and Andrzej Łyda

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P U B L I S H I N G

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INTRODUCTION

Extension is one of the central issues of linguistics, and especially, of Cognitive Linguistics. Since change in language is constant, extension should be seen as a process that mirrors the changes that occur in language. There is something complex and elusive about extension, and as such, it poses a number of methodological and theoretical problems, for instance tracing its regularities of occurrence, mapping its possible directions, and discovering its limits, which makes extension a perfect object of study.

A new approach to extension became possible when what had been hinted at by Wittgenstein (1956) was coupled with Rosch's (1973, 1975, 1976, etc.) insights. Today this approach is equipped with both sound research methodology and principles that are based on psychology. Three of the principles that commonly occur are: firstly, a decrease in the number of category-specific attributes revealed by category elements that is coupled with a simultaneous reduction of elements' similarity to the prototype; secondly, fuzziness of category boundaries (Croft, Cruse 2004:90-91); and finally, between categories that are immediately neighbouring, there exists relatedness (Wittgenstein 1956). Although these principles have been established, other operative factors of extension remain unsettled. A list of these factors includes: the type of phenomena that undergo extension, the starting point for extension, the directions that extension can take, the questions that are concerned with whether or not extension crosses the boundary of categories, and finally, the limits of extension.

The aspect that comes to the fore in this kind of approach is the realization that the phenomena that are under scrutiny in the present volume are complex in nature, that is, consist of several, more or less related, uses, senses, stages, or possibilities of analysis, for which Wittgenstein's (1956) and Rosch's (1973, 1975, 1976, etc.) models seem perfectly suited. By itself, such a conclusion is not easy, for it assumes that the analysed phenomena defy simple classifications and, as a result, require more scholarly attention than unitary phenomena. At the same time, this approach is rewarding, for it is closer to reality and describes the language as it is, and not as it is supposed to be.

A different issue is the type of linguistic phenomena where extension is detectable. It turns out that beside well-established polysemous categories, such as lexical units, constructions, or lexical categories, several less conventional manifestations of extension can be found: a sound, a grammatical property, a type of knowledge, or a kind of research.

Another facet of extension is the starting point for it, which is related to the issue of the prototype/central use and the possible approaches to it. Some of the most common starting points are: Fillmore's (1982:32), the oldest use is the prototype, or Lakoff's (1987:83, 104), the central usage is the prototype. In this latter sense, the central use is where all the senses converge or it is the use that is most common. Langacker (1987:380) indicates two further properties of the prototype: its cognitive salience and its function as the centre of gravity for the category. Taylor (1995:117), in turn, emphasizes that the central member of a family resemblance category shares a maximum number of attributes with other members. As can be seen in the following chapters, the authors make use of different criteria in establishing their starting points for research.

The next point of interest is whether crossing the boundary of a category can be equated with the limits of extension. Again, certain answers have already been provided in this respect. As Taylor (1995:119-121) concludes, neither accommodation of contradictory senses of a polysemous item, nor including the senses of other items restricts extension of a polysemous word. As the chapters collected in the volume indicate, the boundaries of a category cannot be equated with the limits of extension. On the contrary – in many cases extension assumes definitional crossing category boundaries, as it is the case with metaphorical extensions.

At the same time, the very problem of boundaries is debatable. As assumed by Lakoff (1987:12), categories should be seen as revealing a gradation of membership, that is, possessing no clear boundaries. However, this stance can be interpreted differently: on the one hand, in congruence with Lakoff, Taylor (1995:177) insists that prototypes of different categories should be maximally distinct, which leads to two further aspects of the category: gradation of membership for category elements and fuzziness of category boundaries. On the other hand, Szcześniak (2013:167) notes that some linguists treat fuzzy boundaries as nonexistent. A still different question is the number of boundaries and their types – crossing one, less important boundary, as between different grammatical properties of the noun, does not mean crossing a more

general boundary between different lexical categories, as for instance, that of noun and verb.

There is another side to extension – its direction. Again, different approaches to it can be found. On the one hand, most Conceptual Metaphor Theory researchers stress the unidirectionality of extension (e.g. Grady 2007:193) – from a more basic and less structured domain to a more abstract one (though with Kövecses's (2010:18-28) reservation that this is so only in most cases). At the same time, in the case of different phenomena – metonymic mappings, Radden and Kövecses (1999:29) maintain that the source and target are generally reversible (exchanging, at the same time, Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) model of simple mapping for Langacker's (1993) reference point phenomenon where one entity serves as the reference point for mental access to another entity). Both of these options are explored by the authors in their analyses.

Finally, what needs to be settled is the question that figures prominently in the title of the volume – whether or not extension has limits. The authors' opinions are divided in this respect. Their research indicates that in some cases extension does not proceed any further unless further processes are taken into consideration. However, it seems that the ultimate answer to this question is closer to the position advocated by Langacker (1987:17) – that extension is possible as long as the speaker “finds any plausible rationale” for relating an entity to the prototype. As the research of some of the authors indicates, in principle the process of extension does not have to have a limit.

2. The articles in the volume

The volume covers phenomena observable in several languages: beside English, the extensively analysed languages are Polish, French, and Russian. In their analyses, the authors provide insights in four areas. The first of them concerns phenomena and processes that can be found within and between lexicon and grammar, to which four contributions are devoted. **Klaus-Uwe Panther** focuses on extension of culture-specific knowledge to such components of a language as lexicon, syntax, and pragmatics. He argues that cultural models, through metaphor and metonymy, have an influence on both the semantic interpretation of verb-particle constructions and the lexico-grammatical behaviour of NP_1 of NP_2 constructions. By doing so, Panther indicates the motivated nature of verb-

particle constructions and questions one of the long-standing cognitive dogmas originally formulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

In the second chapter, **Henryk Kardela** shows how a morphological analysis can be extended with certain analytical tools introduced by Cognitive Linguistics. Kardela, starting with the notion of “linguistic nest” introduced by Dokulil (1962/1979), broadens the scope of the original theory. He adds to it such dimensions as, for instance, the compositional path (Langacker 1988), the semasio-onomasiological perspective (Dirven, Verspoor 2004), metaphor and metonymy (Panther, Thornburg 2003; Janda 2011), etc. All this allows him to propose an extended, 3-D model that affords an in-depth analysis of both English and Polish lexical items.

In her chapter, **Bożena Cetnarowska** views extension of semantic properties as a process that explains the relation between two categories of denominal adjectives: relational and qualitative. However, there are adjectives that, depending on the context, reveal properties of both categories, which leads Cetnarowska to inquire whether such adjectival forms should be treated as homonymous or polysemous. Consequently, she conducts a comparison, richly illustrated with English and Polish examples, of two approaches to them: one, stemming from Cognitive Linguistics, and the other – from Generative Linguistics.

The author of the next chapter, **Grzegorz Drożdż**, sees extension of semantic properties as a factor leading to the change of grammatical properties of nouns. He analyses the manners in which two theories, the Conceptual Metonymy Theory and Cognitive Grammar, approach the change of the count/mass property of concrete nouns. He compares not only the methods of analysis introduced by both theories: conceptual metonymies (e.g. Radden, Kövecses 1999), the reference point relationship (Langacker 2008), and different construals of nouns (Langacker 2008), but the theories’ efficiency.

The second area of research is devoted to different facets of metaphorical extension, which are discussed by two authors. First, **Jacek Woźny**, working within the Cognitive Metaphor Theory paradigm, analyses the degree of correspondence between source and target domains of conceptual metaphors. He proposes an original method, encompassing both a specific methodology and a mathematical formula that enables him to calculate the degree of similarity between the two types of domains. He shows an application of this method analysing selected metaphorical expressions.

The second analysis, by **Barbara Taraszka-Drożdż**, is conducted within a different paradigm: that of Cognitive Grammar. One of its most distinguishing features is that metaphor is treated there as just one of the types of semantic extension. What is also characteristic for this approach is that such an extension is set within different types of encyclopaedic knowledge which, along with metaphorical extensions of single lexical items, also undergoes extension. Taraszka-Drożdż, tracing the growing levels of schematicity of the analysed items, indicates the types of encyclopaedic knowledge activated by them. At the same time, it should be noted that from the Cognitive Grammar perspective the correlation between source and target domains analysed by Woźny could be accounted for in terms of extension (the source domain constituting the standard of extension and the target domain –constituting its target).

The third area of exploration covers research devoted to the extension of the theoretical perspective – how it influences the understanding of the object of research and, consequently, broadens the previous perspective(s). The first chapter in this section, by **Artur Świątek**, makes a brief overview of the approaches towards the English definite article. Świątek discusses such dimensions of the use of *the* as e.g. identifiability, accessibility, discourse prominence, and point of view. By doing so, he traces the expansion of research on *the* and shows how each perspective has contributed to a more thorough comprehension of this complex item.

Adam Głaz adopts a still different perspective on the English definite article – he analyses it by means of one of the recent cognitive theories, originally formulated by Robert E. MacLaury (1997/2011): the Extended Vantage Theory. This theory, based on two viewing modes: analytic – focusing on the item, and synthetic – emphasising the significance of the system, allows Głaz to approach different uses of the definite article by means of analytical tools stemming from human mental processes.

Another author, **Peter Toporkov**, also discusses an extension of the theoretical perspective, though this time extension concerns the object of research – the concept of causality. Toporkov argues that it should be broadened to encompass not only temporal and logical relations in reality, but also the relation between the subject and object. He conducts his analysis within the framework of predicative semantics and illustrates his point with numerous examples from Slavic, Germanic, and Romance languages.

The last chapter in this section, by **Jarosław Józefowski**, approaches extension in terms of increasing the number of grammatical voices that are present in Polish grammar. Józefowski follows the proposal formulated by Tabakowska (2003) – that the typically reflexive pronoun *się* should, in fact, be regarded as representing middle voice (non-existent in standard Polish grammatical accounts) – and examines the semantics of two pronouns: *się* and *siebie*, formally representing reflexive voice, in conjunction with the verb *widzieć* (see).

The closing part of the volume is devoted to Applied Linguistics and the manners in which the notion of extension can be used in it. First, **Aleksandra Żłobińska-Nowak** discusses the issue of lexical items and their linguistic accounts that are prepared for the purposes of machine translation. The method that she bases on in her considerations is the object-oriented approach proposed by Banyś (2002, 2005). From this perspective, Żłobińska-Nowak analyses selected examples of French lexical items with their extended senses and indicates their Polish equivalents.

A different facet of extension is addressed by **Dorota Lipińska** – the area where it is traced is language learning. Embedding her research within the Speech Learning Model and the Perceptual Assimilation Model, Lipińska explores the issue to what extent, when, and why certain English vowels, non-existent in Polish, merge when produced by advanced Polish learners. Extension in her research turns out to be one of the strategies adopted by Polish students in learning the English sound system.

Last, but by no means least, the editors wish to express their sincere thanks to everyone who was engaged in the preparation of the volume. First of all, our thanks go to the contributors for their participation in uncovering another piece of mystery that extension is cloaked in, as well as for their understanding in responding to the editors' emails. We are also indebted to Professor Krzysztof Kosecki for his penetrating and revealing insights in reviewing the volume, and to the whole Cambridge Scholars Publishing team for their help, patience, meticulous work, and close cooperation in polishing every nook and cranny of this extensive, though limited, undertaking.

Grzegorz Drożdż

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PART I

BETWEEN LEXICON AND GRAMMAR

CHAPTER ONE

METAPHOR AND METONYMY SHAPING GRAMMAR: THE ROLE OF ANIMAL TERMS IN EXPRESSIVE MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

KLAUS-UWE PANTHER

The present chapter focuses on two expressive English constructions, exemplified by verb particle constructions such as *to monkey around* and binominal noun phrases like *a bear of a man*. The analysis of such “critter constructions” requires a rich apparatus of conceptual tools, including animal folk modals, metaphorical and metonymical mappings, and possibly other types of pragmatic inference. I claim that animal folk models, as reflected in the lexico-grammar of languages, tend to be conservative, i.e., they are often based on outdated biological models. As a consequence of this “cultural lag”, it cannot be assumed that animal metaphors in critter construction reflect the way individual language users think about animals. The conceptual analysis of critter constructions challenges the simplistic idea widely held in cognitive linguistics that human thinking is largely determined by conceptual metaphors. Metaphors are often merely ways of speaking, rather than ways of thinking.

Key terms: animal folk models, critter constructions, cultural lag, metaphor and thought

1. Introduction

A long-standing scholarly tradition in anthropology, philology, and linguistics holds that culture is reflected, at least to some extent, in language structure and use. For example, according to Karl Vossler (1921), a scholar steeped in German idealist philosophy, language cannot be adequately described and explained without consideration of its cultural context. More recently, Paul Friedrich (2005:219), among others, has

claimed, “[c]ulture is a part of language just as language is a part of culture and the two partly overlapping realities can intersect in many ways – for which process the term ‘linguaculture’ may serve”.

It is a truism that cultural knowledge is reflected in the vocabulary of languages, i.e. in the meaning of certain culturally loaded keywords (see e.g. Wierzbicka 1997). It is less obvious and open to debate whether linguistic form (phonological and/or morphosyntactic structure) can be motivated by cultural factors.

In the present chapter, I argue that the lexico-grammatical structure of a language may indeed be affected by cultural or folk models.¹ I focus on two emotionally charged English constructions whose meanings are shaped by animal folk models. The analysis of such expressive constructions requires a rich apparatus of conceptual tools, including – besides the notion of animal folk model – metaphorical mappings, as well as metonymical reasoning and possibly other types of pragmatic inference. In section 2, the analytical tools needed for the analysis of such “critter constructions” are presented.

The first case study is an exercise in “expressive” morphology. I investigate animal-denoting nouns *converted* to verbs in verb-particle constructions such as *pig out*, *horse around*, or *chicken out*. The verbs in these expressions evoke animal behavior and are used metaphorically as vehicles for the conceptualization of human behavior and action. The conceptual structure of three such expressions, i.e. *rat out*, *beaver away*, and *clam up* has been investigated in some detail by Panther and Thornburg (2012). The main results of this study are summarized in section 3.

The second case study, which is the main concern of this chapter, deals with a construction that instantiates “expressive” syntax (section 4). It takes as its point of departure Foolen’s (2004) important work on expressive binominal constructions of the type NP_1 of NP_2 in several Germanic and Romance languages. I focus on a subtype of the binominal expressive NP_1 of NP_2 construction in English, viz. the pattern *a* N_1 of *a* N_2 , exemplified by expressions such as *a shark of a lawyer*, *a mouse of a woman*, and *a rat of a boyfriend*. The first noun in such constructions often denotes an animal that, analogously to the verb-particle constructions with

¹ The terms *cultural model* and *folk model* are used equivalently in this chapter.

converted animal terms, relies for its adequate interpretation on folk models of the respective animal mentioned in the construction.

Section 5 concludes the chapter with some brief reflections on the status of animal models and the relationship between metaphor and thinking.

2. Descriptive tools

In the larger context of cognition, the relationship between language and culture can be diagrammed as in Figure 1.

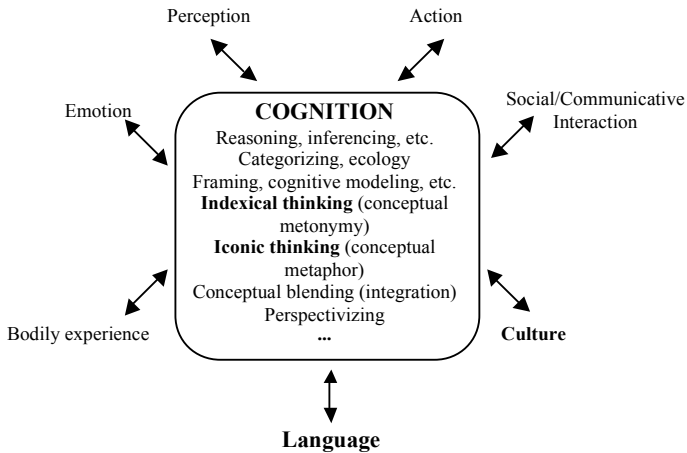


Fig. 1. Cognition, language, and culture (adapted from Panther and Radden 2011:2)

Following Panther and Radden (2011:2), the term *cognition* in Figure 1 refers to higher mental faculties such as categorizing, reasoning, inferencing, framing, cognitive modeling, indexical and iconic thinking, conceptual integration, and perspectivizing. These central components of cognition are connected to various “peripheral” systems such as bodily experience, emotion, action, social interaction, culture, and, last BUT not least, language. The double-headed arrows represent the idea that the peripheral systems are both influenced by, but also feed into, cognition (for more details see Panther and Radden 2011:2-13). In the context of the present chapter, the interactions between the cognitive faculties of indexical thinking and iconic thinking, which underlie metonymy and

metaphor, respectively, and the peripheral systems of language and culture are especially relevant.

Figure 2 depicts a conception of metonymy that has been developed within the last fifteen years by the present author and Linda Thornburg (e.g. Panther and Thornburg 1998, 2003, 2007; Panther 2006).

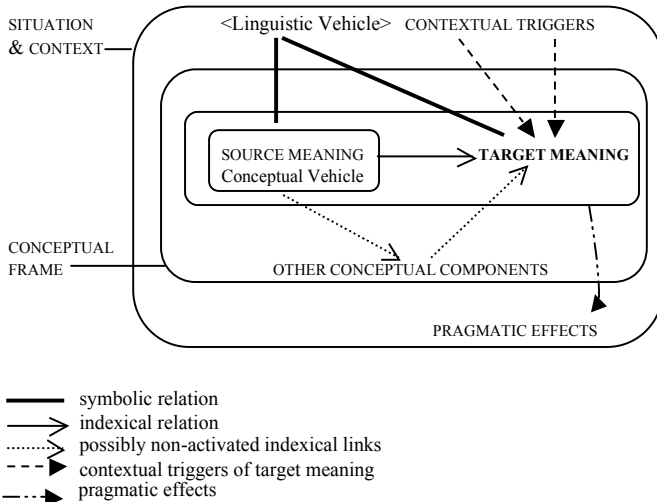


Fig. 2. Metonymy

Metonymies do not occur in isolation but rather in a certain extralinguistic situation and a linguistic context. A metonymy involves indexical reasoning within *one* conceptual frame, taking as its point of departure a *linguistic vehicle* whose denotatum (source meaning) serves as a *conceptual vehicle* to access a figurative target meaning (see also Dancygier 2009 for the conception of metonymy as frame reasoning). The relationship between source and target meaning is often not conceptually necessary but contingent, i.e. defeasible. In this respect, metonymies are like conversational implicatures in the Gricean sense but they are here viewed as conceptual associations and contiguities that *underlie* many implicatures. From the hearer's perspective, other components of the conceptual frame may be activated, especially in the case of unconventional metonymies, which facilitate the comprehension of the intended target meaning. We also assume, as repeatedly emphasized by Antonio Barcelona (see e.g. Barcelona and Valenzuela 2011:28), that

metonymy is more basic than metaphor – contrary to the view of many metaphor scholars (see also Panther 2006).

A final characteristic of metonymies is that they may have pragmatic effects. For example, it certainly makes a difference whether a restaurant customer overhears one server saying to another *Table 5 wants another beer* or whether the server in question refers to the customer as *The guest at Table 5 wants another beer*. In this particular case, the customer might feel slightly offended by the definite description *Table 5* – even if, for the service personnel, *Table 5* is an economical shorthand term for referring to and identifying a specific customer.

The second tool needed for the analysis of the two critter constructions is conceptual metaphor, whose properties are diagrammed in Figure 3.

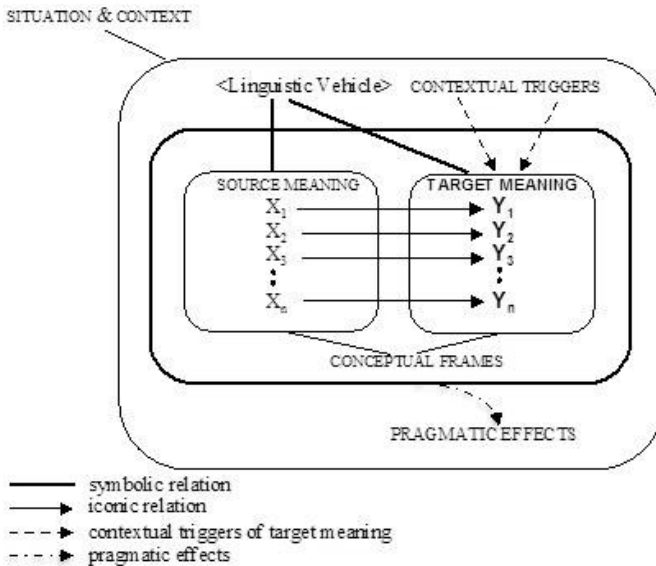


Fig. 3. Metaphor

Figure 3 is inspired by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's foundational work on metaphor (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 2003). These authors conceive of metaphor as a set of mappings from one conceptual frame (source) into another conceptual frame (target).² Lakoff and Johnson

² Lakoff and Johnson use the term *domain* for what is called *frame* here.

(2003:113) emphasize that metaphor does not involve a similarity relation between source and target concepts. For example, there is no similarity between UP (source) and HAPPY (target).³ Nevertheless, I claim that the “similarity” between source and target is structural: the target frame inherits the conceptual organization of the source frame. Furthermore, the kinds of inference (sometimes infelicitously called “metaphorical entailments”) that are operative in the source frame are usually mirrored in the target frame.

Finally, what is needed in the analysis of the two expressive critter constructions is some notion of cultural model or folk model. For the purposes of the present study, it suffices to adopt Quinn and Holland’s (1987:4) characterization of ‘cultural model’:

Cultural models are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it.

An animal folk model comprises information such as the following:

- i. the rank of the animal in question on some ontological hierarchy, called the Great Chain of Being by Lakoff and Turner (1989:4);
- ii. the character of the animal;
- iii. its physical appearance;
- iv. its typical behavior;
- v. its habitat;
- vi. its diet;
- vii. the social organization of the species.

It has to be emphasized at this point that folk beliefs regarding points (i)-(vii) are by no means scientifically accurate. Present-day folk models and superstitions are often more or less equivalent to worldviews going back to the Middle Ages, Antiquity, and possibly prehistoric times.⁴

³ It can however be argued that the relation between UP and HAPPY is metonymic rather metaphoric.

⁴ A good example of an outdated astronomical model that enjoys popularity up to the present day is astrology, the “study of the movements and relative positions of celestial bodies interpreted as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world” (Oxford American Dictionary online, s.v. *astrology*). In the Middle Ages, astrology was one of the seven “liberal arts”, studied as a serious subject at European universities.

The influence that animal folk models may have on linguistic meaning is schematically diagrammed in Figure 4.

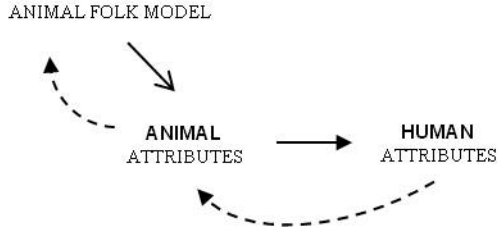


Fig. 4. Animal folk models

In critter constructions, attributes are selected from the animal folk model and metaphorically used to characterize humans. Whether the metaphorical mapping is unidirectional, as assumed by Lakoff and Johnson, is debatable. An interactionist account of metaphor would allow for the possibility of “feedback”, in this case, from the human domain back into the animal domain. For example, the metaphor *PEOPLE ARE WOLVES* conceptualizes the character and behavior of humans, but vice versa it also sheds light on how people endow wolves with negative human characteristics such as ferocity, cruelty, etc.

3. Expressive morphology

In a recent article the present author and Linda Thornburg (Panther and Thornburg 2012) investigated verb-particle constructions whose verbal slot is occupied by an animal term. The central thesis of the article is that (often outdated) cultural or folk models shape the interpretation of verb-particle constructions with animal terms as their verbal heads. The relation between animal model and verb-particle construction is diagrammed in Figure 5.

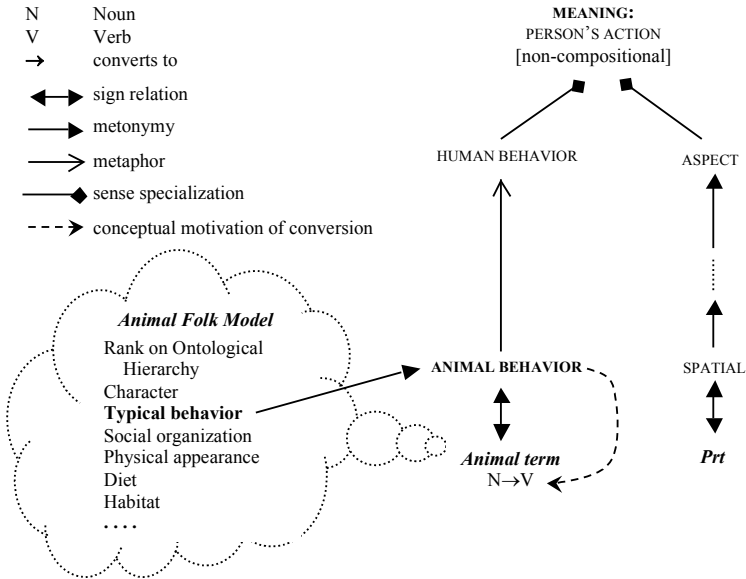


Fig. 5. The impact of animal folk models in verb-particle constructions (adopted from Panther and Thornburg 2012:70)

The basic idea of Panther and Thornburg's approach is that a feature of the animal model is selected (here: typical behavior) and metaphorically projected into the domain of human behavior. The selection of the feature BEHAVIOR enables the original animal noun to be converted into an action verb. The particle contributes a spatial schema that is metonymically elaborated into an aspectual value such as TELIC, DURATIVE, PUNCTUAL, etc. This aspectual value contributes to the overall meaning of the verb-particle construction as an ACCOMPLISHMENT, ACHIEVEMENT, or ACTIVITY (in terms of Vendler's 1957 aspectual categories).⁵

Panther and Thornburg (2012) analyze *rat out* 'inform on', *beaver away* 'work hard', and *clam up* 'abruptly stop speaking' in some detail, showing how the meaning of the converted animal term is fed by a traditional folk or cultural model of the animal in question.

⁵ Apart from strictly aspectual meaning, the particle may contribute additional descriptive senses; e.g. in *pig out* the particle conveys the notion of 'beyond a boundary', which figuratively conveys the meaning 'beyond what is normal'.

The meaning of the verb-particle construction *rat out* (x_{AG}, y_{PAT}) is shaped by a negative cultural model of rats that contains components such as ‘low on ontological hierarchy’, ‘lives in filthy habitat’, ‘carries diseases’, ‘displays vile behavior’. It is this last trait that is the crucial feature in the composite meaning of *rat out*. It is mapped into the human frame as ‘morally reprehensible behavior’ by some AGENT (x_{AG}) towards some PATIENT (y_{PAT}). The spatial source sense of the particle *out* contributes the aspectual value TELIC to the overall meaning of *rat out* via a series of metonymies. In its source sense, *out* designates the motion of some object y (here, the patient y) from a non-visible region into a region where y can be seen by some third party; VISIBILITY of y is then, via metonymic inference, linked to KNOWLEDGE about y ; and finally, there is an inference from KNOWN (y) to KNOWN (y 's LOCATION, INTENTIONS, etc.), i.e., the PATIENT's location, plans, etc. are revealed to some third party by the informer x (sense specialization).

The meaning of *beaver* in the intransitive verb-particle construction *beaver away* is rooted in the stereotype of beavers as industrious animals. This feature is projected into the human frame. The spatial particle *away* marks the aspect of the event coded by the verb *beaver* as DURATIVE. As in the case of *rat out*, the aspectual meaning can be derived via metonymic chaining. Panther and Thornburg (2012:74-76) propose that *away* evokes the motion of some x (the AGENT of the ACTIVITY) along an unbounded path. From this input the aspectual value of an UNBOUNDED ACTIVITY can be inferred. Via an operation of sense specialization, the composite meaning of *beaver away* ‘work hard’ is derived.

The third verb-particle construction analyzed in Panther and Thornburg (2012:76-78) is *clam up*. A central behavioral property of clams is that they close their shells immediately when under threat. The behavior of clams is metaphorically equated with the behavior of persons who suddenly close their lips. This action induces the metonymic inference of ‘stop talking’ or ‘falling silent’. The particle *up* evokes a vertical (upward) movement of something towards some goal (or completion point). This movement is interpreted as instantaneous and abrupt, i.e. PUNCTUAL. The composite sense of *clam up* is both TELIC and PUNCTUAL, i.e., it is an ACHIEVEMENT in Vendler's (1957) aspectual terminology.

As two additional examples that illustrate Panther and Thornburg's method of analysis, let us briefly consider *chicken out* and *monkey around*. The first is based on a folk model of chickens as nervous and fearful birds

that run away or flap their wings in panic at the slightest danger. This property is metaphorically related to the cowardly behavior of humans who withdraw from a task or challenge because they are too fearful. The aspectual meaning of the particle in *chicken out* can be derived metonymically from the spatial source meaning ‘movement out of a container (difficult situation)’ that the agent is too fearful to face. The particle has the aspectual sense TELIC and the construction as a whole is either an ACCOMPLISHMENT (if the motion (= action) is DURATIVE) or an ACHIEVEMENT (if an abrupt, i.e. PUNCTUAL, change of state occurs).

The verb-particle construction *monkey around* is based on a folk model that views monkeys as being close to humans, but at the same time – as the racist use of *monkey* indicates – also as very distinct from “real” human beings. Monkeys are very agile, live on trees in the jungle, like to eat bananas (at least when they are kept in zoos), and exhibit playful and rambunctious behavior. This last trait seems to be the basis of the meaning ‘behave in a boisterous and disorderly way’. The aspectual meaning ACTIVITY is motivated by the particle *around* here meaning ‘(moving) randomly and unsystematically’, which metonymically induces a non-telic DURATIVE interpretation.

What all the above verb-particle constructions have in common (for many more examples, see Panther and Thornburg 2012), is that they function according to the template given in Figure 5. A stereotypical behavioral trait from the relevant animal folk model is selected and is metaphorically interpreted as human behavior. The particle accompanying the ‘animal’ verb is literally a spatial concept that, via a series of metonymic inferences, acquires an aspectual target sense. Finally, the sense of the verb-particle construction is motivated by the metaphorical and metonymic meanings of the verb and the particle, respectively, but the meaning of the whole construction cannot be predicted or computed in a strictly compositional way from the meaning of its parts.

4. Expressive syntax

In English and other languages, there exists a pattern of the form $NP_1 P NP_2$, in which P is usually some equivalent of the English preposition *of*. This construction exhibits a highly expressive meaning and can be found cross-linguistically. The following examples, and many more, have been collected by Foolen (2004):

English

- (1) a bear of a man, a hell of a job, a dream of a car, a dud of a film, a blast of a party

Dutch

- (2) zijn twee apen van kinderen ‘his two apes of children’

German

- (3) ein Engel von einer Frau ‘an angel of a woman’

French

- (4) un fripon de valet ‘a scoundrel of a servant’

Italian

- (5) una bestia di avvocato ‘a beast of a lawyer’

Spanish

- (6) el imbécil de tu hermano ‘this idiot your brother’

The expressions listed in (1)-(6) have syntactic heads that are metaphoric and often connote a high degree of emotivity. In semantic terms, they seem to function as modifiers rather than conceptual heads. In section 4.1 a specific subtype of this construction is introduced and its syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties are discussed in more detail in sections 4.2-4.4.

4.1. Constructional homonymy

The focus of the present chapter is on the specific pattern *a N₁ of a N₂*, i.e. the case where both nouns in the pattern are specified by the indefinite determiner *a(n)*. Consider utterances (7)-(14):

- (7) Prosecutor Bahrman painted a portrait of a man who had simply had enough of his wife ... [COCA⁶]
- (8) My father told me a story of a man that wanted something very badly as a boy. [COCA]
- (9) I think it is the right thing for them to do to pick a governor of a state that has got a great story to tell. [COCA]
- (10) What can I say? I forgive you. A quarter of a century ago you danced with my girlfriend. [COCA]
- (11) I told him he’s doing a hell of a job as president, is what I told him. [COCA]

⁶ COCA stands for *Corpus of Contemporary English*, a freely available balanced 450 million word corpus made available by Brigham Young University [<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca>]

- (12) You're innocent, and have to prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt.
[COCA]
- (13) A hint of a smile was twitching onto Cody's face. [COCA]
- (14) [...] I don't think there is a ghost of a chance, for example, that the oil embargo will be lifted [...] [COCA]

A closer look at the binominal expressions in (7)-(14) reveals that the pattern *a N₁ of a N₂* represents a case of constructional homonymy, in the sense of Chomsky (1957:86).⁷ Ignoring sentence (10) for the time being, one can say that sentences (7)-(9) and (11)-(14) structurally look alike, but they are conceptually remarkably different. In (7)-(9), *portrait*, *story*, and *governor* function both as syntactic and conceptual heads of their respective noun phrases; in contrast, in examples (11)-(14), the syntactic heads *hell*, *shadow*, *hint*, and *ghost* cannot be regarded as conceptual heads. Thus, there is a mismatch (i.e. lack of isomorphism) between syntactic structure and conceptual structure in (11)-(14). In (11) *hell* is the syntactic head, but it does not make sense to say that the sentence is about a hell; rather it refers to the job performed by some U.S. president. The noun *hell* functions semantically as a modifier, or even intensifier, of *job*; the speaker intends to convey the idea that the president performs 'a great job'. Similarly, in (12), intuitively, the speaker's message is not about the syntactic head *shadow* but about the doubt that people may have about the addressee's innocence; *shadow* thus functions as a highly expressive metaphorical modifier of the semantic head *doubt*. The syntactic heads *hint* and *ghost* in (13) and (14), respectively, again serve as conceptual (metaphorical) attributes rather than as conceptual heads, i.e., they semantically modify *smile* and *chance*, respectively.

But what about *a quarter of a century* in (10)? Is utterance (10) about a quarter, i.e. a part or fraction (of something), in which case quarter would be both syntactically and conceptually the head of the binominal phrase? Or, is it rather about a time period (spanning twenty-five years), in which case *century* would conceptually head the binominal construction? The phrase *a quarter of a century* resembles measure phrases such as *a pound of coffee*, *a teaspoonful of sugar*, or *a pinch of salt*. In these expressions the denotatum of the second noun is conceptually salient, i.e., it functions as the conceptual head of the phrase. If this analysis is correct, *a quarter of a century* must be treated analogously to examples (11)-(14), in which the functions of syntactic head (N₁) and conceptual head (N₂) are dissociated.

⁷ Chomsky actually uses the term *constructional homonymity*.

However, what distinguishes *a quarter of a century* from examples (11)-(14) is its lack of expressivity.

In what follows, I ignore temporal constructions of the type instantiated in example (10) and focus on the clearly definable distinction between constructions exemplified in (7)-(9) and (11-14), respectively. I refer to the binominal expressions in (7)-(9) as instances of the ‘unmarked’ *a N₁ of a N₂* construction. This type is by far the most common in terms of token frequency, which justifies calling it ‘unmarked’. It is also unmarked in the sense that it exhibits an isomorphic relationship between its syntactic and semantic structure, as shown below. In contrast, the binominal expressions in (11)-(14) display a remarkable asymmetry between form and content/function, which motivates calling them ‘marked’.

To summarize, noun phrases of the structure *a N₁ of a N₂* have at least two readings, which do not seem to be conceptually related. It is, therefore, justified to call the pattern *a N₁ of a N₂* constructionally homonymous, in contrast to many other constructions, e.g. the ditransitive construction, which exhibits a family of senses, i.e. is a polysemous construction.

4.2. The *a N_{ANIMAL} of a N_{HUMAN}* construction

Foolen (2004) was among the first cognitive linguists to investigate constructions of the type illustrated by (11)-(14) in various Germanic and Romance languages (see examples (1)-(6) above). The present chapter is inspired by Foolen’s important work but also tries to move beyond it in several respects, aiming, in particular, at a more precise distributional and semantic-pragmatic analysis of the marked *a N₁ of a N₂* construction in English. The present study is further restricted to marked *a N₁ of a N₂* constructions – typically those in which the *N₁* slot is occupied by an *animal term* and *N₂* denotes a *human being*. In the following, I refer to this specific construction as the *a N_{ANIMAL} of a N_{HUMAN}* construction, whose formal, conceptual, and functional properties are spelled out in the subsequent sections. Along the way, this construction is – where helpful and necessary – compared to the unmarked *a N₁ of a N₂* construction.

The *a N_{ANIMAL} of a N_{HUMAN}* construction can, like the verb-particle constructions discussed in section 3, be called an *expressive crier construction*. It is instantiated by utterances (15)-(20), collected from the English language corpora *WebCorp* and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA).

- (15) Deneuve's co-worker is mired in an abusive relationship with "a pig" of a man [...] [WebCorp]
- (16) All you need is the constitution of a lion and a lamb of a husband. [WebCorp]⁸
- (17) [...] I kinda miss being a clam of a person [...] [WebCorp]
- (18) Marge is a mouse of a woman, thin and frazzled [...] [COCA]
- (19) [...] one fella tiny, nervous, prancing sideways, shaking his glossy black mane, a racehorse of a man, sixteen if he was a day [...] [COCA]
- (20) But what makes her different than the average college student who juggles a heavy workload and a rat of a boyfriend? [WebCorp]

To give the reader an idea of the animal terms occurring in the first noun slot of this construction, the American English corpus COCA was searched for the time span between 1990 and 2012 with the human noun *man* in the second noun position. The frequency figures are given in Figure 6.

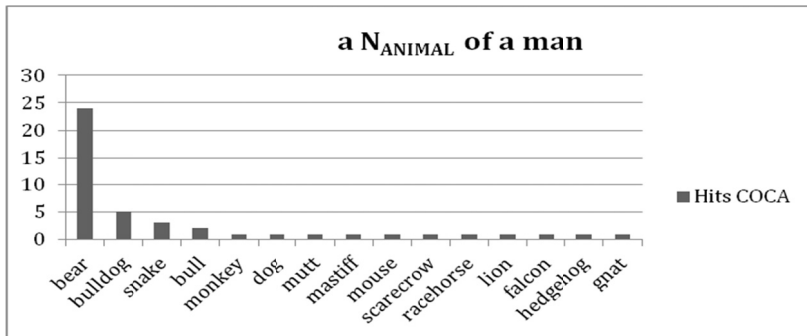


Fig. 6. Frequency of the type $a N_{ANIMAL}$ of a man in COCA (absolute numbers).

By far the most frequent animal term in the $a N_{ANIMAL}$ of a man pattern, and thus possibly the most entrenched expression, is *bear*, but exoticisms like *a hedgehog of a man* or even *a gnat of a man* are also attested. The list of possible animal terms in the first noun slot is most likely indefinitely large; i.e., the construction is highly productive.

⁸ WebCorp is a freely available corpus provided by the City University of Birmingham, U.K.

4.3. Some formal constraints

Before investigating the semantics and pragmatics of the marked (vs. the unmarked) construction in more detail, some remarks about formal properties of the *a N_{ANIMAL} of a N_{HUMAN}* construction are in order; more specifically, the question has to be addressed whether there are constraints on determiners (articles and demonstratives) before N_1 and N_2 and on the grammatical number of the two nouns. Consider the expressions in (21) with varying determiners (including zero) before the N_1 and the N_2 position:

- (21) a. a bear of a man
 b. *a bear of the man
 c. the bear of a man
 d. this bear of a man
 e. *the bears of a man
 f. *these bears of a man
 g. bears of men

As can be seen from the examples in (22), the binominal expressions (21a), (c), (d), and (g) are all attested, whereas no instances of patterns (21b), (e), and (f) can be found in the two corpora WebCorp or COCA:

- (22) a. A bear of a man with a reserved nature, he could seem imposing at first glance but almost always rendered help to those who needed it [...] [WebCorp]
 b. *: not attested in WebCorp and COCA
 c. They became concerned about him dying before his time, just like the bear of a man before him [...] [WebCorp]
 d. But from the moment she meets Howard Barr, this bear of a man makes her feel like a woman. [WebCorp]
 e. *: not attested in WebCorp and COCA
 f. *: not attested in WebCorp and COCA
 g. By the end of the weekend I am deeply struck by the many forms of male beauty: Big roaring bears of men, fierce flying falcons of men, deep diving trout of men. [WebCorp]

The fact that some patterns are not attested in either WebCorp or COCA is not conclusive evidence that they constitute systematic gaps, but one can at least tentatively assume that formal constraints on determiner selection and grammatical number assignment exist. This problem is, however, beyond the scope of the present chapter. My focus is on conceptual and