

## No lexical override in external argument interpretation

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Marantz (1984) observes that the interpretation of external arguments is determined relative to a phrasal domain (the VP), while the interpretation of internal arguments is determined in relation to the verb (or root). This has been shown to be a robust cross-linguistic fact about the way in which hierarchical structure maps to NP interpretation (see especially Ramchand 2008), whose validity holds even in idiom formation (see discussion in Kratzer 1996, Lidz 2000, Harley 2014).

What does not seem to have been previously discussed is that all current analyses of transitive motion verb phrase subjects contradict (what I will refer to as) Marantz's generalization. Instead, these external arguments (EAs) are said to have 'exceptional' lexically-specified interpretations, which are not determined in relation to the verb phrase. The subject of *follow*-type verbs is commonly analysed as holding a Theme thematic role (1a), a role lexically entailed by *follow* (Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2001 a.m.o.) (and a role that is not *prima facie* derived via classical implementations of Kratzer's VoiceP). In (1b), the subject is interpreted as in-motion along with the object ("Accompanied Motion"). Folli & Harley (2006) argue the interpretation of *waltz* subjects can be introduced "Encyclopaedically" (=Late) via lexically-specified features on roots.

1. a. The wise men followed the star to Bethlehem. (Wechsler 1997)
- b. Mary waltzed John around the room. (Folli & Harley 2006)

In this paper I show that close reassessment of the properties of (1a) and (1b) in fact provide novel evidence in favour of Marantz's Generalization. I show (A) The EAs in (1a-b) exhibit the canonical relationship between syntax and semantics, whereby transitive subject  $\rightarrow$  Agent / transitive object  $\rightarrow$  Theme (e.g. Kratzer 1996, et seq.). (B) All 'special' aspects of the interpretations of the EAs in (1a) and (1b) systematically derive from the composition of the verb phrase. (C) Lexical entailments/properties of verbs/roots are shown not to interact in any formal way with the interpretation of EAs. As such, (1a-b) not only offer novel strong support that the interpretation of EAs is determined in relation to the verb phrase (e.g. by regular compositional rule), but verb/root lexical semantics are in fact unable to 'suppress' or 're-write' the formal properties of EAs established in this way (*contra* current analyses of motion EAs cited above):

2. *No Lexical Override*: The verb/root cannot override the semantic properties of the EA that are established in relation to the phrase.

The first part of this paper concentrates on (1a), presenting evidence that the thematic roles of the EAs (as well as the 'unselected object' in (1b), which is in some sense an 'Agentive' object) are determined syntactically. Thematic content can be identified by syntactic/semantic tests like adverbial modification. I apply a battery of adverb tests to the NP arguments in (1). Tests for agency are the ability to: wield a *with* PP instrument; control a Rationale clause PRO; be modified by agent-oriented adverbs. (I show these tests reliably pick out Agents, and not e.g. subjects). The subjects of both (1a-b) pass these tests; neither of the objects do. I conclude the object in (1b) does not hold an Agent role in the formal grammar. I label *John* in (1b) a *Pseudo-Agent*. Tests for Themehood ('undergoing change or holding a state', in line with traditional descriptions of (1a) as a 'Theme subject') include: contradiction when the NP is denied as holding an end-state/location (3a); coercibility into a state-holder interpretation by specifying a definite temporal point with which the (change-of-) state/location coincides (3b); and a non-attained result state interpretation of *almost* modification (3c). (3) shows the apparent 'Theme Subject' in (1a) fails each of these tests. (In contrast the *Pseudo-Agent John* in (1b) passes all these tests). I label the subject in (1a) a *Pseudo-Theme*.

3. a. The wise men followed the star to Bethlehem, but they ended up in Allentown due to unexpected cloud cover.
- b. ??The wise men had followed the star to Bethlehem at 2pm.
- c. The wise men almost followed the star to Bethlehem. (Means *the wise men almost followed*, not that they almost arrived at Bethlehem)

(3) contrasts with the object of *lead* (4). *Lead* and *follow* can be understood to describe the ‘same event’; but the participant roles of the NPs depend on their position in the clause.

4. a. The star led the wise men to Bethlehem, ??? but they ended up in Allentown due to unexpected cloud cover.
- b. The star had led the wise men to Bethlehem at 2pm.
- c. The star almost led the wise men to Bethlehem (but they didn’t quite get there).

The distribution of thematic roles in these expressions therefore in fact supports a strict relationship between syntax and compositional semantics. The construal of the lexico-semantic participant roles of the verb/root does not override this formal relationship, supporting (2).

The second part of the talk concentrates on apparent ‘exceptional’ interpretations of the EA, focusing on the Accompanied Motion (AM) subject in (1b). Previous work says (1a-b) involve resultative secondary predication, with (1b) an Unselected Object Resultative, structurally equivalent to (5) (Folli & Harley 2006), i.e. a (small clause) secondary XP introduces the object NP. Current analyses of (1b) resort to a lexically specified AM interpretation of the EA, because the EA of (5) does not have an AM interpretation, only (1b) does.

5. John sang his throat hoarse./ The critics laughed the actors off the stage.

I argue (1b) has been misanalysed as a ‘resultative’; (1b) actually involves a transitive verb phrase. First, constituency and distributional diagnostics show that (b) has a transitive [ V O ] syntax, and PP is a vP-attached adjunct interpreted as an event modifier (6). In particular, (1b), but not (5), license: the VP pro-form *do so*; *though*-movement; V-fronting; a topicalized XP; a clefted XP. The sentences in (5) do not. [V O] therefore forms a constituent in (1b), to which PP is external; (5) do not have [V O] syntax (Simpson 1983, Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995). The main reason for analysing the PP in (1b) as a secondary XP is as an argument licenser of the object NP (Folli & Harley 2006). But (7) shows the NP is fine with adverbs (mostly repetitives and intensifiers) (7a), under negation (7b), and with heavy NP objects. These same contexts do not license unselected objects of unergatives in resultatives (7a’, 7b’). Further, (1b) objects appear in contexts such as nominalizations without PP; (5b) objects do not.

6. [VoiceP NP [Voice’ Voice [ vP [ PP ] [v’ [√FOLLOW/√WALTZ v ] Obj ] ] ] ]
7. a. Coach swims the team weekly.                      a’. \*John sing himself weekly.
- b. Coach didn’t swim the team today.              b’. \*John didn’t sing himself.
- c. Coach chose to swim the team that came second in the last heats.

I conclude the PP in (1b) is not a result (location) XP, and (1b) is neither syntactically or semantically ‘resultative’. Instead, the PP is an adjunct that modifies (describe the Path/ trajectory of) the (vP) eventuality. In (1b) PP describes *waltz John*, not (just) *John*. I propose the semantic modification of the Path PP is equivalent to Maienborn’s (2001) ‘external’ Locative PPs, e.g.: If *Ava signed the contract in Argentina*, it is not *the contract* that is in Argentina, but the event. I call (1b) an Event Modification syntax of the PP.

Returning to the question of the AM interpretation, the examples in (7a-c) illustrate that the AM interpretation is lost when there is no PP. However, I observe that plenty of other (especially activity) verbs have an AM interpretation of their subject when a PP is present (8). I conclude that the AM interpretation of the subject is determined in accordance with the composition of the PP-modified verb phrase, precisely in accordance with Marantz’s generalization. There is no reason to invoke lexical entailments or lexically specified features borne by the verb/root in EA interpretation.

8. Mary kicked the ball along the street. (Possible reading: both Mary and the ball went along the street).