RESTRICTIONS ON DENOMINAL VERB FORMATION

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Denominal Verbs

- Verbs formed from noun roots
  - *John **shelved** the books.*
  - *Hank **saddled** the horse.*
- Spectrum/Hierarchy
  - Innovative → Opaque
  - *She **Houdini'd** her way out of the closet.*
  - *The protesters **boycotted** the company.*
- Restrictions
  - *#Rachel **desked** the papers*
- Why is this important?

Outline

- Hale and Keyser's system of lexical argument structure
- Clark and Clark's analysis of denominal verbs
- Conventional and conversational implicatures
- Denominal verb proposal

Lexical Argument Structures

- System of structural relations
- Projected from the lexicon to the syntax
- Noun incorporation
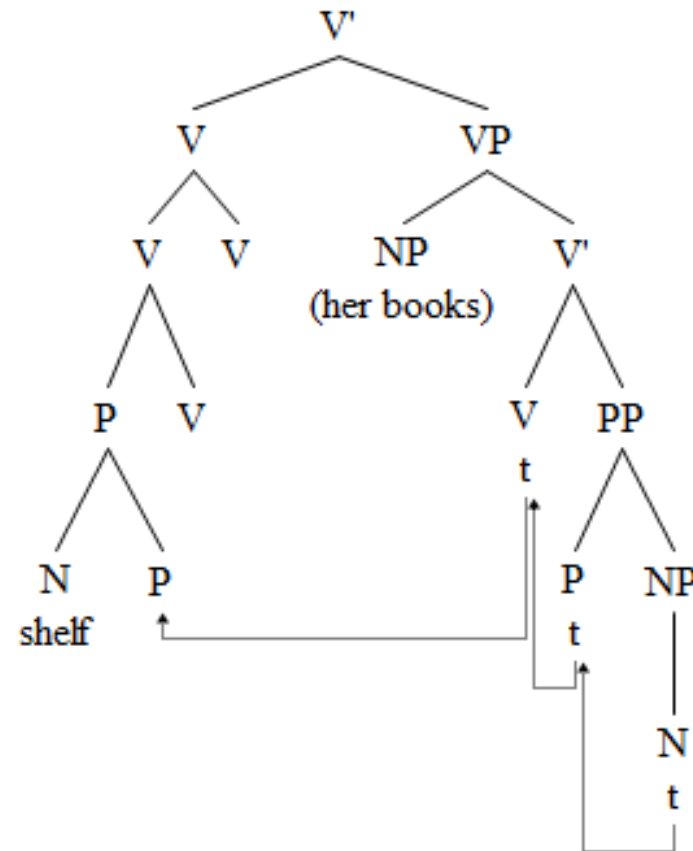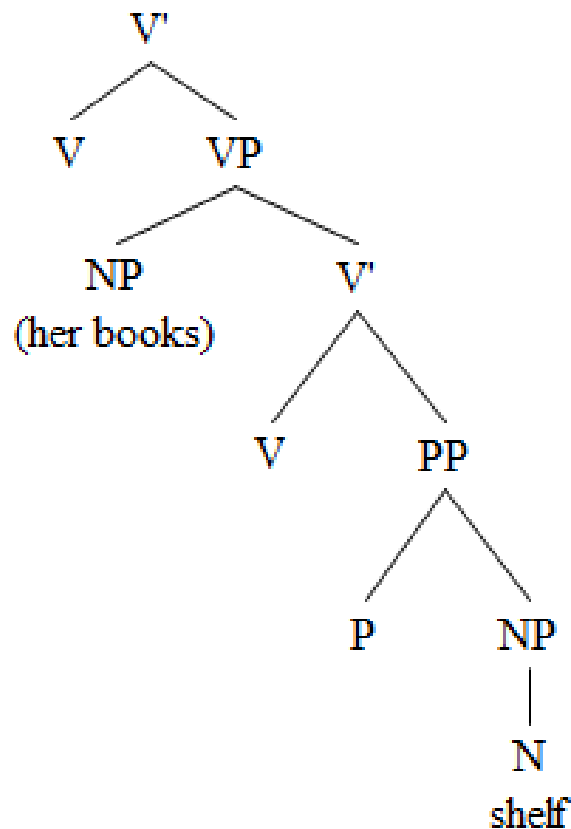- Subject to syntactic principles

Hale and Keyser (1993)

Lexical Argument Structures

"She put her books on the shelf."

Hale and Keyser (1993)
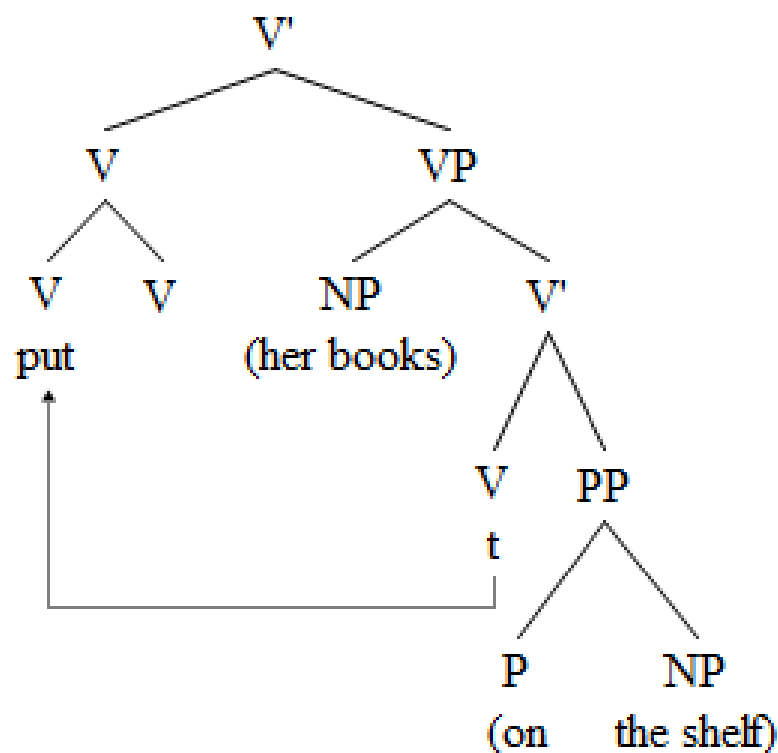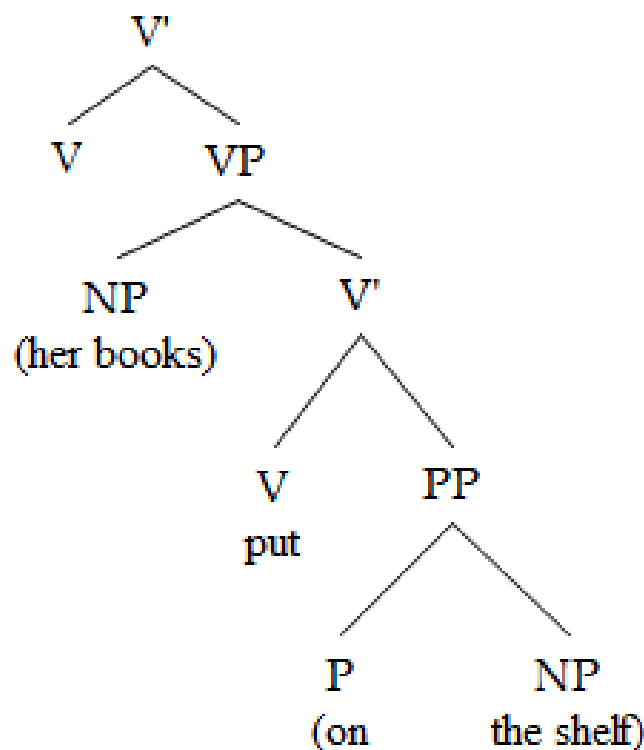
Lexical Argument Structures

"She shelved her books."

Hale and Keyser (1993)

Lexical Argument Structures

- Benefits to this analysis
  - Follows syntactic principles and restrictions
  - Helps explain certain restrictions like *#house the paint* (meaning provide a house with a coat of paint)

Hale and Keyser (1993)
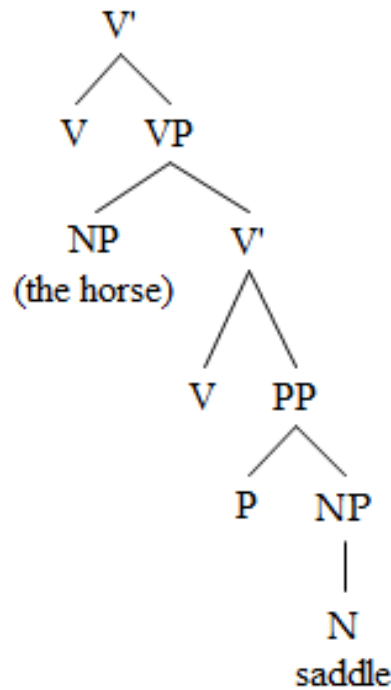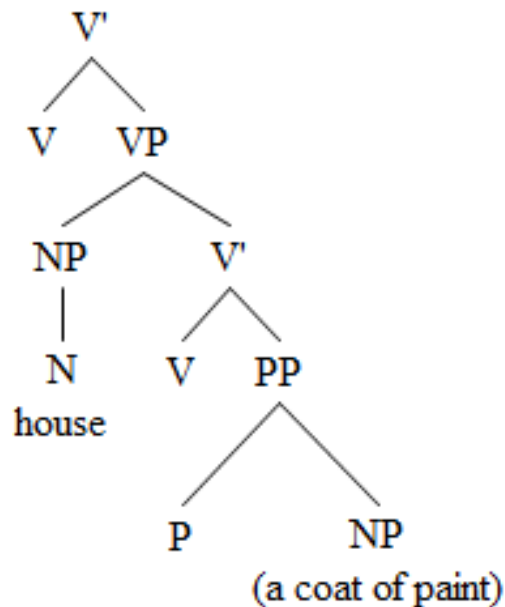
Lexical Argument Structure

- Problems with this analysis
  - Doesn't explain the *shelve/#desk* pair
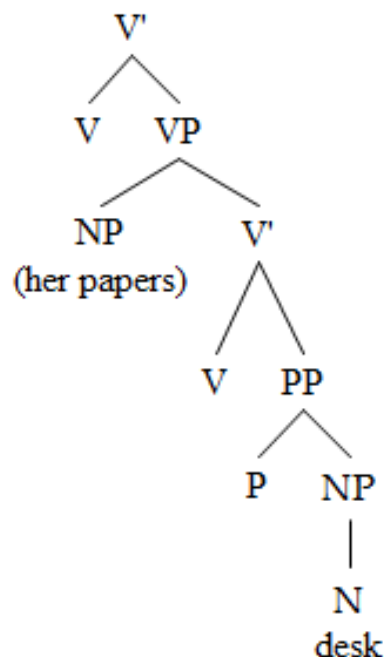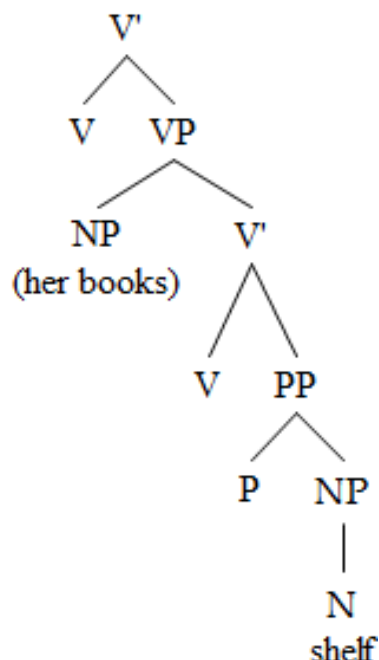
  - Impossible words aren't blocked (Fodor and Lepore 1999)
    - *#to cow* would be considered an acceptible verb.

Hale and Keyser (1993)

Clark and Clark (1979)

- World Knowledge & Mutual Knowledge
  - *The boy porched the newspaper.*
- Restrictions on denominal verb formation
  - Specificity
  - Suppletion
  - Homonymy
  - Synonymy
  - Ancestry
  - Entrenchment
- Informal analysis; no formal pragmatics

Implicature

- Conventional Implicature
  - A. *Even Ken knows it's unethical*.
  - A'. *Ken is the least likely to know it's unethical*.
  - Non-cancellable
    - *#Even Ken knows it's unethical, but that's not surprising*.
  - Detachable
    - *Ken knows it's unethical (too)*.

Implicature

- Conversational Implicature
  - B. *Jones dresses well and writes grammatical English.*
    [in a recommendation letter for a philosophy position]
  - B'. *Jones is no good at philosophy.*
  - Cancellable
    - *but I don't mean to suggest that…*
  - Non-detachable
    - Expressing the same literal meaning in the same context would create the same inference.
  - Context-dependent

Horn (2006)

Proposal

- Denominal verbs create conventional implicatures.

- Solves the *shelve/#desk* problem from Hale & Keyser.

- Formalizes Clark & Clark's analysis of restrictions and world knowledge.

Proposal

- *Shelve* has a convention associated with it.
  - Shelving books has the convention of arranging them vertically in rows, perhaps in order.
  - *Shelve* is an acceptable denominal verb.
- *Desk* does not have a convention.
  - There is no convention for placing items on a desk that warrants the use of *desk* as a denominal verb.
  - *Desk* is not a valid denominal verb.

Examples

(1)   a. *Marianne shelved the books*.
           a' *Marianne put the books on the shelf vertically, in rows.*
           b. *#Marianne shelved the books, but they're in random piles*.
           c. *Marianne put the books on the shelf*.

(2)   a*. Orson saddled the horse.*
           a'. *Orson put the saddle on the horse, and strapped it on with*
the intention of riding it.
           b. *#Orson saddled the horse, but only by laying it on the*
horse's back, temporarily.
           c. *Orson put a saddle on the horse.*

(3)   a. *Arthur speared the lion.*
           a'. *Arthur used the spear to impale the lion with the spearhead.*
           b. *#Arthur speared the lion, but by hitting it over the head.*
           c. *Arthur used a spear against the lion.*

Where are we now?

- We have a way of describing the observed restrictions on denominal verbs using a standard system of pragmatics.

- My proposal addresses the problems with Hale and Keyser's system and formalizes Clark and Clark's ideas.

References

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- Fodor, Jerry and Lepore, Ernie. "Impossible Words?" *Linguistic Inquiry.* 30.3 (1999): 445-453. Online.

- Hale, Kenneth and Keyser, Samuel Jay. "On Argument Structure and the Lexical Expression of Syntactic Relations." *The View from Building 20: Essays in Linguistics in Honor of Sylvain Bromberger.* Ed. Kenneth Hale and Samuel Jay Keyser. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993. 53-109. Print.

- Horn, Laurence R. "Implicature." *The Handbook of Pragmatics.* Ed. Laurence R Horn and Gregory L Ward. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. 3-28. Print.