PREDICATE NOMIMALS IN COMPLEX PREDICATES.

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The term "light verb", coined by Jespersen (1965), refers to the verbs in expressions such as take a walk, give a groan, give the floor a sweep, give a demonstration of the technique, make an offer, have a bite and do the ironing. The defining characteristic of these expressions is that the main semantic content of the predicate is provided not by the verb, but by the action nominal complement; i.e. John made an inspection of the premises means "John inspected the premises": similarly for the other examples.

Sentence pairs with and without light verb constructions (eg. I swept the floor, I gave the floor a sweep) may differ in interpretation with respect to aspectual or durative properties of the event, the casualness of the action, the degree or type of affectedness of the Patient, etc. These differences seem to hold only in the constructions of interest here, but will not be discussed in this paper. See Wierzbicka (1982) for a full discussion of similar semantic properties in the have a swim construction. The original

light verb insight, that <u>make an inspection</u> means "inspect",
is more accurately **expressed** as a relation of **thematic**
paraphrase.

This notion of thematic paraphrase is quite explicit in
analyses   of light verb predicates which propose   that
theta-roles or thematic indices determined by the nominal
head of a light verb's complement are assigned in syntax, or
in other words are **involved** in **a** theta-marking relation. **The**
general picture is that thematic indices originating with N
may move to V for assignment under government by V in the
usual fashion. Thematic indices may move by a lexical rule
of complex predicate formation **(eg.** Grimshaw 1988), or
alternatively, by percolation in the syntax **(eg. Jayaseelan**
1988). Proposals of the second type treat the complement to a
light verb as a predicate nominal.

In this paper I **shall** contrast the **NP** complements **of** a
particular type of light verb predicate (Type A), illustrated
in **(1),** with those of the rest (Type B). I suggest that the
peculiar properties of **NP** complements in Type A predicates
follows from the fact that they are indeed predicate
nominals.

(1)   John gave the roses a prune.
        John gave the soup a heat.
        John gave the trousers a press.
        John gave the garden a water.
        John gave the pot a stir.
        John gave the potatoes a scrape.
        John gave the blankets an air.

John gave the room a quick tidy.
John gave the eggs a beat.
John gave the party a miss.
John gave the boiler a stoke.

Contrasting Properties of Nominal Complements.

Although Type A and Type B predicates both fall within the traditional light verb class as noted by Jespersen, and discussed by Cattell (1984) among others, their **nominal** complements **differ** in the following properties.

- The nominal complement of a Type A predicate cannot be the surface subject of a passive.

(2) a. * A prune **was** given (to) the roses last week.

  b. * A pull was given (on) the rope.

  c.   An inspection was made last week.

  d.   A demonstration of the new technique will be given on Monday.

- **A** Type **A** nominal complement cannot be the focus of a WH-question or be modified by a relative clause.

(3) a. * Which prune did John give (to) the roses?

  b. * Which pull did John give (on) the rope?

  c. * A prune John gave the roses improved the new growth.

  d. * A pull John gave the rope had little effect.

  e.   Which inspection did John make?

  f.   Which demonstration did John give?

  g.   The inspection John made provoked quite a reaction.

  h.   The demonstration John gave was interesting.

- A Type A nominal complement cannot be **pronominalised.**

(4) a. * I gave the soup a heat and then Bill gave it one **too.**

  b. * Give the garden a water tomorrow and another **one** on Friday,

  c. The Health Department made an inspection on Monday, and may make another one before prosecuting.

  d. If you can give a presentation after lunch I'll give **one/mine** after yours.

- **A** Type **A** nominal complement must be indefinite.

(5) a. The bike looks terrific.
     * Who **gave** it the polish?
     (**cf.** Who did the polishing?)

  b. * The roses are doing well.
     Who gave them the prune this year?
     (cf. Who did the pruning this year?)

  c. I can't find the report and I don't know who made the inspection.

  d. The representative who gave the demonstration left his card.

- **A** Type **A** nominal complement is headed by a stem noun identical in form to a corresponding verb.

(6)   Give X a heat, a prune, a press, a poke, a water, a stir, a scrape, an air, a tidy, a beat, a miss, a shake, etc.

  cf. Make an inspection, a descent, a correction, an agreement, an innovation, an improvement, etc.

       Give a demonstration, a description, a presentation, a performance, a rendition, etc.

- The only other environments in which many stem nouns typical of a Type **A** nominal complement may appear are as in (7),

(7)   Those plants could do with a water.
        Those plants need a water.
        Did these tables get a wipe?

- Stem nouns with an action reading, typical of Type **A** predicates, do not license argument-denoting NPs within their maximal projection.

(8)   a. * John's stir of the soup got the lumps out.

      b. * John's prune of the roses was successful.

      c. * A heat of the soup is all that remains to be done.
           (cf. Heating the soup is all that remains to be
            done.)

      d. * I was pleased by the children's water of the garden.
           (cf. I was pleased by the children's watering the
           garden.)

      e.   John's inspection of the plant was rather cursory.

      f.   John's demonstration of the technique was
           interesting.

SUMMARY.	TYPE A	TYPE B
The complement NP becomes surface subject in passive.	no	yes
The complement NP undergoes WH-movement.	no	yes
The complement NP can be pronominalised.	no	yes
The complement NP may be definite.	no	yes
The complement NP is always headed by N which is : - a stem form identical to a verb - restricted to light verb environments - unable to license argument-denoting NPs within its projection.	yes	no

<u>Discussion.</u>

        It is clear that Type A and Type B predicates should not

be given the same syntactic analysis.

I propose that the essential point about a Type **A** predicate is that the action nominal complement is not an argument of the light verb, but a predicate which combines with the light verb to form a complex predicate V', eg. <u>give a sweep</u>. In this operation the thematic indices determined by N are identified under government with those determined by V, and then assigned under government by V' and VP to the appropriate arguments. (I assume here the VP structure of Larson (1988), in which the verb and nominal complement form a constituent at D-Structure.) Thus in a complex predicate V', V does not theta-mark NP, but NP modifies V.

Higginbotham **(1987b)** argues that the indefinite article of a predicate nominal, unlike the definite article, may be analysed as adjectival, in which case it fails to bind any thematic index determined by the head noun; thus the maximal projection of such an NP has indices to assign and may function as a predicate. I assume this explanation for the indefiniteness effect shown above.

I assume also that the modification of V by NP in a Type **A** predicate does not involve complement selection of NP by V in such a **way** as to allow V to properly govern NP or its trace, hence the lack of Passive or WH-movement.

In Type **B** predicates, on the other hand, it appears that the action nominal complement is a theta-marked argument of

V, from which it follows that NP may be definite, with no free thematic indices to assign, and that the trace of NP is properly governed by V. The light verbs of Type B predicates select action nominals as complements, and assign to their other arguments the appropriate thematic roles with respect to the event denoted by the complement.

The canonical Type B light verb is nonauxiliary do, whose chief semantic function is to assign to its external argument the Agent role in the event denoted by its complement. Syntactically, however, **do** behaves like any transitive verb, as in (9), and a syntactic analysis of predicate composition is inappropriate.

(9)   The photocopying has been done.
       What are you doing?
       Don't worry about the printing, I'll do it.

       do a dance, do the accounts, do dinner for six, etc.

See also **Higginbotham** (1985) **for** a discussion of suffer, undergo, as verbs which assign the Patient role to the external argument.

Double Objects.

At first sight the Type **A** expressions **give X a prune**, etc. resemble double object constructions, but the analysis here clearly denies that possibility. First, note that

analysing Type A predicates as double objects offers no explanation for the facts already reviewed,

Note also **that** the apparent dative alternation in (10) below is in fact Heavy NP Shift, as shown by the contrasts between (10d-f) and (10h-i).

(10) a.   John gave a tug to every rope in the belfry.

b.   John gave a stir to several pots on the back of the **stove.**

c.   John gave a prod to each button in the top row of the console.

d.   **John** gave **a** stir to every pot on the back of the stove.

e. ?? John gave a stir to the **pot.**

f, * John gave a stir to it.

g.   John gave a **book** to every child in the family.

h.   John gave a book to Mary,

i.   John gave a book to her.

There are, of course, true double object constructions in which the prepositional variant may only occur **if** the Goal **NP** is Heavy, (eg We gave a call to everyone on the list), but in those cases the preposition <u>to</u> **is** the dative preposition licensed by <u>give</u>.

In the Type A predicates discussed here it can be shown that <u>to</u> **in** (10) is not the dative preposition **licensed** by <u>give</u>, but a thematic preposition which assigns Patient, licensed by the Patient-selecting predicates <u>give a tug</u>, <u>give</u>

a stir, etc.

To as an indicator of Patient arguments is also found in derived **nominals** and in constructions with **do**. Rappaport (1982) observed that many, perhaps all, derived nominals are unable to independently **theta-mark** internal arguments, which **must** be governed by an appropriate thematic preposition, instead of **of**. Many such nominals, as in (11), mark Patient arguments with to.

(11) a.   Injuries to players are **not** covered by the policy.

  b.   Alterations to the east wing were completed in March.

  c.   **All** damage to furnishings must be paid for.

  d.   The committee approved funding for improvements to the clubhouse.

It is also well known that the do-to construction selects Agent-Patient predicates; the selection of affected objects is noted by Fiengo (1980 p.37) with the following illustration.

(12) a,   What Rome did to Carthage was destroy it.

  b. * What John did to great relief was express it.

The requirement t'hat **to** govern an affected object (or Patient) is also demonstrated by the contrast in (13).

(13) a.   What have you done with the scissors?
        (**i.e.** Where are they?)

  b.   What have you done to **the** scissors?
        (i,e, Why are the blades chipped?)

If the **to** which appears in Heavy NP-Shifted Type A predicates is Patient-assigning **to**, rather than the dative **to** licensed by **give**, the Heavy NP-Shifted **construction should** not be possible where the complex predicate V' does not select a Patient argument. The examples in (14) show the accuracy of this **prediction.**

(13) a.   John gave the pot a stir.

    5.   What John did to the pot was stir it.

    c.   John gave a stir to every put on the back of the
         stove.

    d.   John gave the party a miss.

    e. * What John did to the party was miss it.

    f. * John gave a miss to every party this month.

    g.   John gave the system a try.

    h. * What John did to the system **was** try it,

    i. * John gave a try **to** every system in the User's Guide.

Conclusion.

    The evidence reviewed here suggests that the traditional light verb intuition of thematic paraphrase serves only as an initial heuristic in the study of complex predicates. It does not folloe that all predicates which fall in the light verb class have the same structure.

    Indeed, it appears that the range of possible light verb

predicates extends from what I have called Type B predicates, canonically those headed by <u>do</u>, which I consider to have the syntax of any transitive verb, to true verbal idioms, which are listed in the lexicon.

I have argued here that the intermediate complex predicate, formed in **syntax** by identification of thematic indices, has clear syntactic properties which follow from its structure.

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